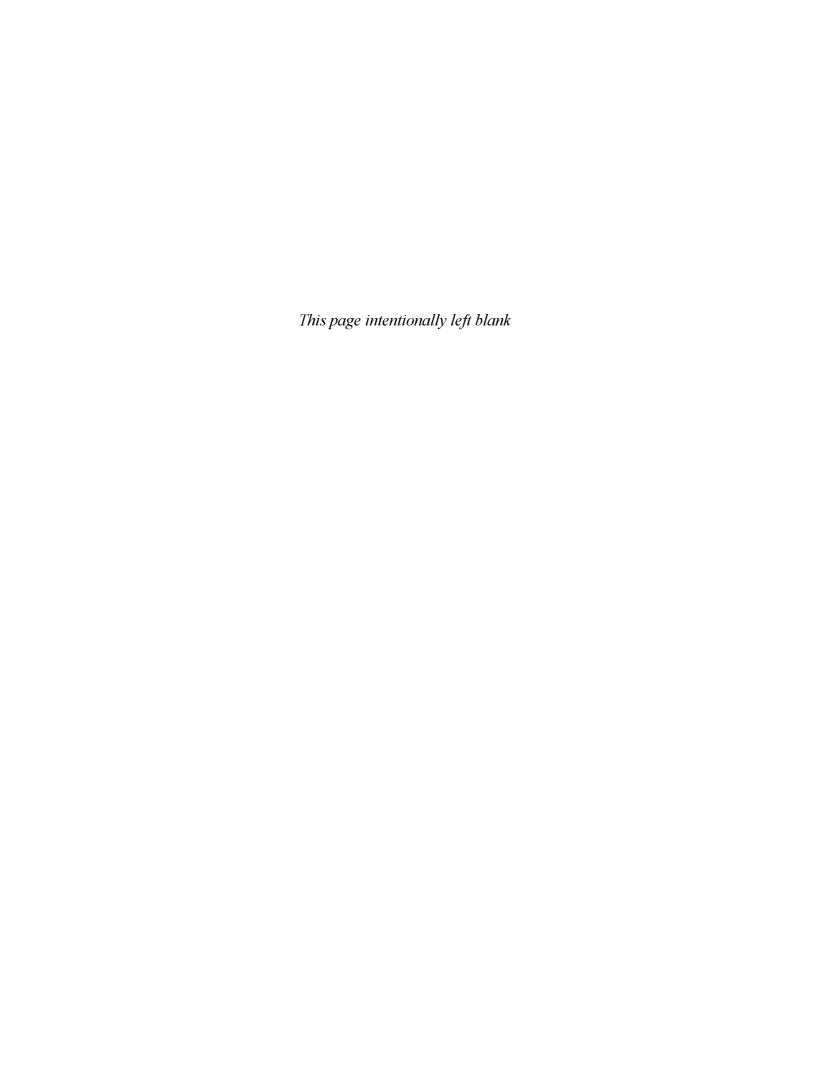
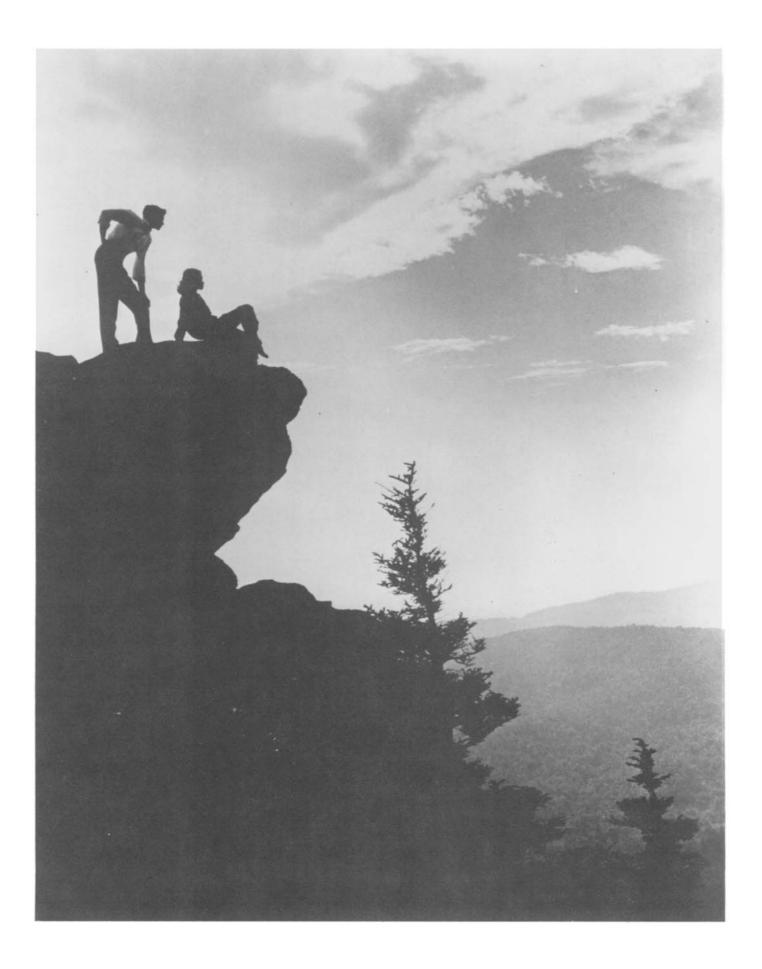
A VILLAGE TAPESTRY

The History of Blowing Rock





A Village Tapestry

The History of Blowing Rock by Barry M. Buxton



WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY JERRY W. BURNS

Church Drawings by Robert S. Jones

Appalachian Consortium Press Boone, North Carolina



The Appalachian Consortium was a non-profit educational organization composed of institutions and agencies located in Southern Appalachia. From 1973 to 2004, its members published pioneering works in Appalachian studies documenting the history and cultural heritage of the region. The Appalachian Consortium Press was the first publisher devoted solely to the region and many of the works it published remain seminal in the field to this day.

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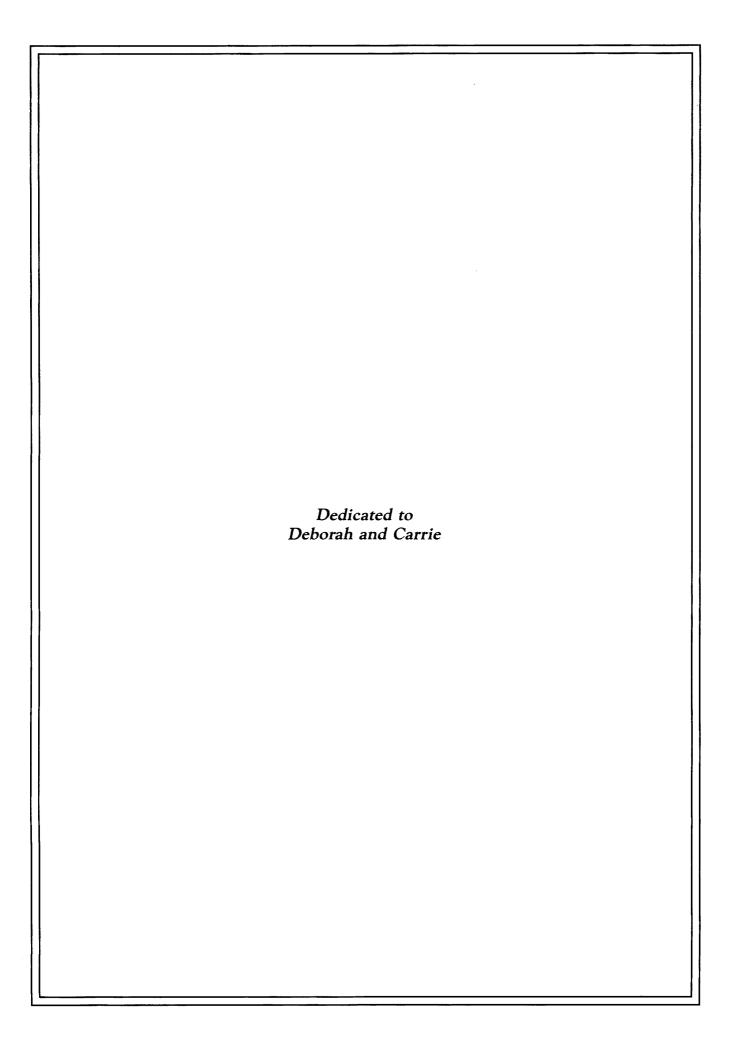
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Worthy of special recognition are the individuals and businesses who have supported this project financially. Through their generous contributions, they have participated in the preservation of our community's unique heritage. In helping establish Blowing Rock as a town which cares about its past, they have enhanced the future for generations to come.

Two organizations, though distinctly different, have worked in harmony to make the dream of this Blowing Rock history a reality. The Blowing Rock Rotary Club and the Appalachian Consortium combined forces to plan and carry out this three-year project. During this time, I have been privileged to work with self-effacing men and women from both organizations like Lisle Snyder, Bill Burke, Bob Gibson, Bob Whatley, Chris May, Clinton Parker, and Roberta Herrin, to name just a few. Each has recognized the importance of community history and provided a good deal of encouragement along the way.

The Advisory Committee for A Village Tapestry has represented the diversity of opinion and breadth of knowledge which is reflected in the larger community. They have been outspoken on a wide range of subjects, ultimately assuring a more balanced product. Professor Chalmers Davidson has been thorough and constructive in manuscript review, providing encouragement and sage advice. The same may be said of Gwyn Harper, who has given generously of his time and shared his knowledge of Blowing Rock.

I am especially indebted to my colleagues at the Appalachian Consortium who have unselfishly supported me through this protracted effort. Monica Norris has supervised typing while Jane Shook has skillfully managed a challenging production process and worked closely with Bob Gibson in developing a marketing plan. Bonne Ross is responsible for the fine design work and John Morefield, Editor of the Press, has helped shape the text. Art Rex designed the map which accompanies the Blowing Rock Landmarks section.

Five research assistants have contributed to the project: Amy Davidson, Rebecca Durr, Gene Hyde, Karen Lohr, and Matthew Walpole. Especially noteworthy is the research on early Blowing Rock by Mr. Walpole and the extensive interviews conducted by Mrs. Davidson. Their efforts have been invaluable.

My work during the past three years has been guided by friends and colleagues who have provided advice, information, and encouragement. Among these are Clinton Parker, Jo Stahle, Hugh Morton, Milton Ready, Caroline Abernethy, Judith Burns, Hayden Pitts, Bob Gibson, Eric Olson, Steve Sudderth, David Greene, Harriet and Charles Davant, Pearl and Elmer Wood, and the late Carl Ross.

Bill and Judy Burke and Jane Shook have done a splendid job on the formidable task of indexing and proofreading. We have struggled together to correctly identify people and places from Blowing Rock's past.

My loyal friend and sounding-board throughout the research and writing has been Jerry Burns. His vivid color photography makes us all rejoice and give thanks for the abundant beauty of our Village. Jerry's *Blowing Rock Story* has also been a welcome resource and the starting point for much of my photographic research.

Finally, I want to thank my family for their support. My mother, Carrie, the real family expert on Blowing Rock, has answered many questions and provided colorful first-hand accounts of Village life.

One person more than any other, however, is responsible for the completion of this work — my wife Deborah Keyes Buxton. She has been my chief editor, critic, and constant source of encouragement.

Barry M. Buxton Blowing Rock, North Carolina 11 December, 1988

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INTRODUCTION

In his writing T.S. Eliot encouraged us to explore throughout our lives. He said that the end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. So it is for me with this history of Blowing Rock.

I was born in the old Wallingford Clinic in 1949. The delivering physician was a young newcomer by the name of Charles Davant, Jr. My early years were spent growing up in Mayview Park, the youngest in a family of seven children. I attended the community elementary school, Blowing Rock High, and nearby Appalachian State University. Graduate school in the midwest took me away from Blowing Rock in the '70s but I returned home to assume a position at the Appalachian Consortium in 1980.

Four years after returning to Blowing Rock, I received a phone call from a dear friend of the Buxton family, Judith Burns. The purpose of the call was to inquire as to whether the Appalachian Consortium Press would be interested in publishing a history of Blowing Rock. Judith, who loves Blowing Rock as much as anyone ever has, felt that a book needed to be written which would capture the town's colorful past. Judith's idea found a receptive audience with me and I immediately began to explore funding possibilities for such a project. Although my initial inquiries were unsuccessful, the idea had such merit it simply would not go away.

Two years later, on May 19, 1986, I was invited to speak at a luncheon meeting of the Blowing Rock Rotary Club. Toward the end of the presentation, I suggested to those in attendance that a great project for the Rotary Club would be to assist in underwriting a history of Blowing Rock. Judith's original idea once again fell on receptive ears and, after the formal program, Dr. Lisle Snyder and Mr. Bob Whatley approached me to discuss the matter further.

Approximately three months after that presentation, I was asked to meet with some key members of the Blowing Rock Rotary Club at Bob Whatley's office. Present were Bob Whatley, Bill Burke, Bob Gibson, and myself. We discussed the cost associated with producing such a history, the time required for the research and writing, and the potential revenue from book sales. I agreed to attempt to write the history provided that there was sufficient lead time and some graduate students were available to assist with reserach. The Appalachian Consortium Press would serve as the vehicle to publish, warehouse, and market the book if it met the Publications Committee quality standards. It was at this point in the meeting that Bill Burke introduced the idea of connecting the proceeds from the sale of the history book to the restoration of Mayview Lake. The idea was a stroke of genius, and it instantly generated uniform praise from all present. Henceforth, the two causes became inseparable and virtually everyone in Blowing Rock welcomed the project with enthusiasm. Many citizens wanted to see a history written, while others were more concerned about expanding the town park system and beautifying the area around Mayview Lake. The compatibility of the two ideas immeasurably enhanced the potential of both.

Following that historic meeting in Bob Whatley's office, Bill Burke and Bob Gibson set about forming a fund raising committee for the project. Our first meeting was on October 23, 1986 in the American Legion Building. Four key members of that committee were Caroline Abernethy, Jerry Burns, Hayden Pitts, and Chris May. Under Bill Burke's leadership, the committee began a letter solicitation campaign. The history book/lake beautification initiative was so successful that we soon received more than enough donations to publish the history as originally conceived. The contributions arrived in varied sizes and from both year-round and seasonal residents. It was apparent that this was an idea whose time had come and the enthusiasm of Blowing Rock citizens inspired all of us who were involved. With additional funds now available, we modified our original plans for the manuscript and decided to include a color photography section which would focus on Blowing Rock today.

A special sub-committee of the fund raising committee was subsequently formed, consisting of Bill Burke, Bob Gibson, Chris May, and myself. We approached two of Blowing Rock's most prominent summer families, each known for their philanthropy, about the possibility of supporting our project in a significant way. Paul Broyhill, son of the late

J.E. Broyhill and President of the Broyhill Foundation, responded enthusiastically to our presentation. Ironically, many years before, the Broyhill family had expressed an interest in restoring Mayview Lake to its former beauty, so their involvement in the current initiative was a natural.

The next inquiry of the special sub-committee was to Anne Cannon Forsyth. In the relatively short history of our small community, no single individual had been more generous in providing support for the critical needs of Blowing Rock. We were pleased that she and Dr. Forsyth agreed to hear our presentation on the history/beautification initiative. After an introductory trip to Winston-Salem, we returned one month later to see the Forsyths with additional details of the proposal. They made a very generous commitment and we departed feeling the success of the project was assured.

Even though as of this writing financial support is still forthcoming, and more is needed for future maintenance of the lake area, what started as a modest effort to finance and publish a community history has resulted in over \$300,000 of support for historic preservation and beautification of our town. Indeed, we have much for which to be proud and thankful. Few small resort communities can match what Blowing Rock has accomplished.

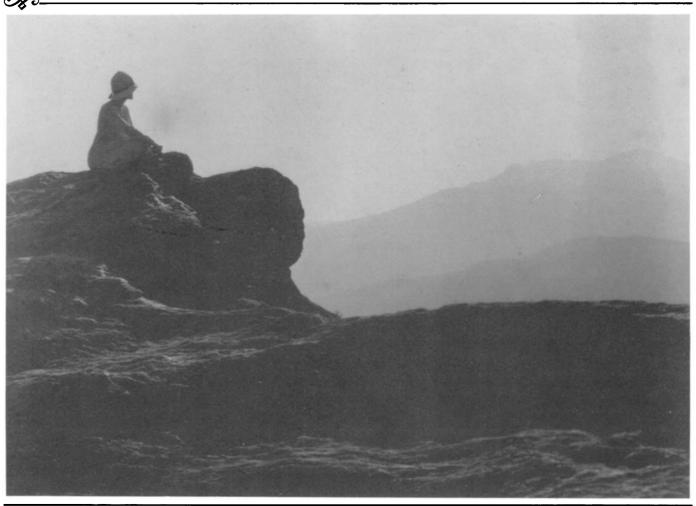
And so for me, after three years of intensive involvement with this project, I have arrived where I started, knowing Blowing Rock for the first time. Now more than ever before, I see the wisdom of Eliot's words. My enhanced understanding of the town where I was born and raised is not the result of any particular insight on my part, nor is it a result of the extensive research associated with this history. Rather, it flows from my involvement and association with a variety of wonderful people who believe in this community, men and women who have dedicated themselves to a project intended to enhance the quality of life of Blowing Rock citizens for generations to come. It has been a difficult, but immensely rewarding experience.

My only regret associated with A Village Tapestry is that it is simply not possible, with a finite budget and significant time restrictions, to recognize every individual and family who have contributed to our Village. Instead, I have attempted to depict the variety of personalities and experiences which, woven together, represent the spirit of Blowing Rock. Admittedly, my efforts have been largely focused on the town's early history. It is those days before air conditioning and supersonic air transport that defined Blowing Rock for decades to come. Those were indeed the grand old days of Blowing Rock.



A Village Tapestry





CHAPTER I

Land Of The Breeze And Home Of The Brave

Blowing Rock has always demanded a price from those wishing to share in her beauty. The windy heights and rugged slopes discouraged early settlement by both Indians and whites alike. Only within the last century-and-a-half have roads existed to permit the growth resulting in the Blowing Rock of today.

The Blowing Rock mountains before this time served largely as an uninhabited buffer between two hostile tribes, the Cherokee to the southwest and the Catawba to the southeast. The main sweep of early Scots-Irish settlement patterns also avoided the North Carolina mountains. Ships from Europe docked at Philadelphia or other northern ports, and settlers moved from the great western jumping-off point of Pittsburgh and down the Great Valley of Virginia. Passes from southern Virginia into Kentucky attracted most of the colonists, and only the most ambitious (or hard-headed) of these farmers, hunters, and trappers continued south into the mountains of the Tar Heel state. Although Indian artifacts and camp sites have been found in Watauga and Caldwell counties dating back thousands of years, those first European immigrants saw few Native Americans.¹

First Visitors: A Taste of Blowing Rock

The first recognized European visitor to the Blowing Rock area was the Moravian Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg in 1752. At that time, all of Western North Carolina was included in a royal property grant belonging to the Earl of Granville. To encourage settlement, he offered 100,000 acres to the Moravians, so Spangenberg set out with a survey party to search out the best land.

An old Indian trading path known as the Nickajack Trail ran through the mountains from present-day Hickory, to Lenoir, to Linville, and west to the Nickajack Caverns near Chattanooga, Tennessee. Inaccurate directions from a passing hunter soon led the Bishop's party off any semblance of a trail. Journal entries have been used to reconstruct a probable route up the St. John's River, overland to the Watauga River valley, across to the New River, and then out of the mountains by way of the Yadkin.

Anyone who has ever had roadside trouble on the trip to Blowing Rock can read the Bishop's account and take comfort in the fact that it could have been worse, much, much worse.

For company he had "the wolves, which...give us such music of six different cornets, the like of which I have never heard in my life." The uphill journey was agonizing. "Part of the way we had to crawl on hands and feet; sometimes we had to take the baggage and saddles and horses and drag them up the mountain, for the horses were in danger of falling backward."

Finally their perilous trek was matched by the beauty of the Blue Ridge that patiently awaited them. "Arrived on the top at last, we saw hundreds of mountain peaks all around us, presenting a spectacle like ocean waves in a storm." Unfortunately for the Moravians, they were not summer visitors. The preceding December 3, 1752, diary entry continues to state, "We pitched our tent, but scarcely had we finished when such a fierce wind-storm burst upon us, that we could scarcely protect ourselves against it. I cannot remember that I have ever in winter anywhere encountered so hard or so cold a wind. The ground was soon covered with snow ankle deep — and the water froze for us beside the fire.

Our people became thoroughly disheartened."3

Bishop Spangenberg settled on a tract of land near Winston-Salem, at Bethabara. A hint of Blowing Rock winter had chased her first prospective citizen far away.

Before "The War"

Little changed over the next one hundred years. The Revolutionary War largely bypassed extreme western North Carolina; in any case, the first family known to settle in the Blowing Rock area did not arrive until the 1790s. These were the prolific Greenes. By the mid-1800s, when the first summer residents began visiting from Lenoir, the Greene family was established with Edmund living near the future site of the Green Park Hotel, and the brothers Joseph and Benjamin living near the Mount Bethel German Reformed Church. Isaac lived where the Boyden house would be built, Amos near the future location of the Reeves house, and Robert by what would be Cone Lake. Lot Estes, who was married to Benjamin's daughter Chaney, bought the property that would be developed into the Chetola Estate for \$5 in 1846. The Greenes can rightfully lay claim to being the first family of Blowing Rock.

The Hayes, Storie, Estes, Bolick, and Coffey families, all prominent in later town history, were also early settlers in southern Watauga County.⁶ Pioneer life for these people was a harsh reality, where mere survival meant self-sufficiency. A contemporary account of life with the Reuben Coffey family in the early nineteenth century reveals the settlers' creative ability to cope. "All came out of the ground, both eating and wearing....The women would card, spin, and weave clothing for themselves and children. They had dresses of different colors and stripes. They got their colors from indigo of their own raising, copperas, and various kinds of blossoms. The first calico dress I ever saw father bought for my sister, then



"G.L. Storie's Stock certificate in the Lenoir and Blowing Rock Turnpike Company"

about sixteen years old. He gave a three year old steer for six yards, which completed the dress."7

Local trade moved primarily south to Lenoir. The alternative was through the hamlet at Councill's store (not yet known as Boone) and then to Wilkesboro. Cabbage, hay, and livestock — mostly swine — were brought down the mountain trail, and exchanged for manufactured goods. By the 1840s, prosperous Lenoir merchants were pasturing their livestock in the mountains, too. Herders were joined by early tourists eager to enjoy the cool weather. A few houses took boarders for short periods of time, but most of the travellers camped out. The smoke from their cooking fires would attract local residents for talk and trade.⁸

The increase in traffic made obvious the need for a better road into the mountains. James C. Harper, the nephew of prominent Lenoir merchant James Harper, had done the official surveying for the town of Lenoir when it was established in 1840. He took this experience and the strong support of the Lenoir community to the state legislature, and secured the incorporation of the Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike Company in 1845. James C. Harper not only surveyed the route and managed the construction by hundreds of laborers both slave and free, but remained as the first president of the Turnpike Company until his death.

The road was built with pick, shovel, and gunpowder. Mules and oxen hauled off the debris. The Turnpike had a graded dirt surface, levelled by teams pulling drag pans behind them to scrape the roadbed smooth. Switchbacks were used to keep the slope manageable for heavily-laden horse-drawn wagons.⁹



"Traffic" on the Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike before the turn of the century

Benefits from the road ran both ways. Blowing Rock trade now flowed almost exclusively to Lenoir. In the fall, so many pigs were driven down to an open common area of the town (behind the current county office building) that it was known locally as "Hog Wild." Shortly after the Turnpike's completion, the region's first cotton mill was started in Patterson. Mountain dwellers flocked to this local source of cotton thread. 11

The people of Lenoir, too, took advantage of the road. A summer home in the mountains was now only a long day away. Mountain land once considered worthless was now available for development. Appropriately, it was James Harper who in 1856 built, near the Blowing Rock, what is believed to be the first summer home which he called "Summerville." He was soon followed by Millers, Isbells, and other prominent Lenoir families.¹²

Mountain Man to Soldier

The Civil War interrupted Blowing Rock's growth as a seasonal resort. Although the area avoided any major battles, local manpower was drained by the call to service; five companies of about 150 men each joined the Army of the Confederacy from Watauga County, and seven more from Caldwell County. Among the men enlisting from Caldwell was 3rd lieutenant Joseph B. Clarke, who would later become the first mayor of Blowing Rock.¹³

Due to its mountainous nature, land in Watauga County had never been friendly to large scale agriculture. Consequently slave-holding, although legal, had never become an important part of the economy. The County Census for 1850 revealed only 84 slaves to 29 free colored citizens and 3245 whites. By 1860 the population had risen to 4957, with only twenty additional slaves during that ten-year period. Because the preservation of the plantation economy was not a crucial issue, many mountaineers chose to lie low in the high hills and hope the war would pass them by. As many as 100 are estimated to have slipped over the Tennessee line to join the Union Army.¹⁴

The notorious Keith Blalock from Grandfather Mountain was one such soldier. He first enlisted on the Confederate side in March of 1862, accompanied by his wife Malinda who disguised herself as his brother. The two tented together while awaiting a chance to desert. When a month passed without the knock of opportunity, the Blalocks took other action. Keith stripped naked and rubbed himself with poison oak from head to toe. He then presented himself to the unit surgeon covered with a horrible rash, and was discharged as medically unfit for service. Fortunately for her, Malinda was able to obtain her discharge by the less drastic method of revealing her femininity.

Keith Blalock was later involved in a less humorous incident, one which shows starkly the bitter divisions caused by the War. When his rash healed after his return to Grandfather and he failed to reenlist, he was attacked by neighbors who were convinced that he was a traitor to the Confederacy. Austin Coffey, Keith's stepfather, fed and sheltered the Blalocks before they escaped to Tennessee, where Keith joined Stoneman's troops. Following a later Union raid, Coffey was pointed out to Confederate troops as a Union sympathizer by a neighbor, John Boyd. He was taken captive, and a week later his dead body was found in a clump of bushes.

When Blalock returned home in 1866, one of his first acts was to find John Boyd and kill him. The War was over; Blalock had made no attempt to hide the killing, and was clearly guilty of murder. He was pardoned by the occupation government, however, and never went to trial. Keith and Malinda Blalock both lived into the twentieth century, reminders of a brutal time in Blowing Rock history.¹⁵

Where Keith Blalock's story showed the effects of war within the small community, Colonel George Kirk became the terror from outside. Kirk headed a group of Union soldiers based in east Tennessee who had the gall to call themselves the Third North Carolina Mounted Infantry, United States Army. His force was composed of a mixed group of mountaineers and Confederate deserters of dubious loyalty, and served mainly as scouts and local raiders.

In March of 1865, General George Stoneman marched his troops from Tennessee to Boone, where he split his command. One part went south towards Lenoir and Morganton; the other, headed by Stoneman, went east to Wilkesboro. Kirk was left in Boone to protect supply lines and keep the back country under control. Kirk, too, split his forces. Major Bahney was sent to Deep Gap to guard the east flank and Major W.W. Rollins was sent to Blowing Rock with about two hundred men to watch the southern approach. Kirk himself remained at his Boone headquarters with about four hundred troops.

For military purposes, Blowing Rock was known as Watauga Gap and Major Rollins set up a stockade near the future site of the Blowing Rock Hotel. He felled trees to give himself a view to the south and east. One report indicates that the original Harper home was demolished at this time to provide lumber for the Yankee fortifications. The site was appropriately named for its commander: Fort Rollins.

As it happened, few Confederate troops were left anywhere in the area. Far from having to fight any pitched battles, the Union soldiers were free to raid the countryside in search of supplies and loot. In fact, Kirk's major responsibility became the care of over one thousand prisoners sent north from Lenoir, bound for camps in Ohio.¹⁷

It's a Nice Place to Visit But. . .

War's end saw the birth of a full-fledged summer resort business in Blowing Rock. During the fighting, war refugees from throughout the South had fled to the relatively safe North Carolina highlands. Lenoir was so crowded by early 1864, that the wife of a Confederate Colonel reported that she could find no place (in town) to board. Spillover came further up the mountains. Although their first exposure may have been forced by war, many of these people would return as tourists.

The first post-war vacation facilities were provided by boarding houses, not hotels. The Martin House, which still stands beside the Park, was built in 1870 as a private residence. The demand for lodging resulted in a series of additions to the house, with eventual space for fourteen roomers. The Martins, who also operated a hotel in Lenoir, went into the general merchandise business with Mayor J.B. Clarke in 1889, and the Martin House remained a civic and social center for many years.¹⁹

William Morris bought the Amos Greene property in 1874, and built Blowing Rock's first true boarding house. He also ran a small store, post office, and real estate construction business.²⁰ Facilities were limited. John Schenck, Sr. used to joke that the rooms were so small that lanky lodger Mr. Stringfellow had to sleep with his feet out the window, and the chickens would roost on them.²¹ The Morris cooking was widely praised, however, and drew such notables as Senator Matt Ransom for repeated visits. Room and board was 50 cents a day, or \$15 a month.²²

The Harper property was bought about 1877 by W.W. Sherrill, who built two or three small houses for summer renters where Blowing Rock's first summer home had stood. This enterprise did not last, and shortly afterwards the land was sold to the Weedon family.²³

L.W. "Len" Estes developed the Chetola property into the town's second largest boarding house. The lake was then called Silver Lake, and trout fishing was a major attraction. Again, the rooms were small, and the food was plentiful — although apparently not varied enough for one visitor. In a letter of general praise for the Estes' lodgings, the author closes by reporting: "As to the eating, I may add ham, chickens, and eggs enough to make you curse both boar and rooster. After being here a week, I heard Will singing in his sleep one night, and this is what he sang:

'There is a boarding house not far away where they have ham and eggs three times a day;

Oh! how those boarders yell, when they hear that dinner bell,

Eggs are fresh but they will smell, three times a day." "24

Governor Zeb Vance must have been more interested in Estes' fishing than in Morris' cooking, for that is where he stayed. Ransom and Vance, Confederate war heroes and respected politicians, did much by their presence in the early post-war years to make Blowing Rock a resort of choice for socially prominent Carolinians.²⁵

Many visitors were taken enough with mountain life to want to stay the entire season. They chose to build second homes in the highlands, and referred to themselves as "cottagers." The cottages these wealthy vacationers

built were actually two-and three-story wooden frame Victorian houses. They had to be large enough to accommodate both the owner's family and as many of his servants as were brought for the summer. Building material grew everywhere; chestnut bark was the most popular siding.



The Earl Estes Farm and Way Station in 1885. The farm would later become Estes Boarding House and then Chetola.



The Martin Cottage

Light in the homes was provided by kerosene lamps. Fireplaces could be used for heat, but during the summer months the combined warmth from several lamps was usually enough for comfort.

Finding a good water supply was a bit more complicated. Springs were most often found in hollows, not on the ridges which provided the best view. For those who had them, springs provided not only drinking water but a source of refrigeration. Spring houses would be built over a trough about 6" deep, 1' wide, and 10' long, into which the water was diverted. Crockery containing dairy products and other perishables would be set in the cold mountain water, where the food would remain fresh for days.

The absence of a spring did not present insurmountable problems. Drinking water was carried in buckets by hand or horse from the closest supply. Cisterns were installed under the eaves to collect rainwater run-off, which could be heated by wood stove and used for bathing and washing clothes. The amount of available water divided by the size of the family determined whether or not the youngsters received hand-me-down bath water.

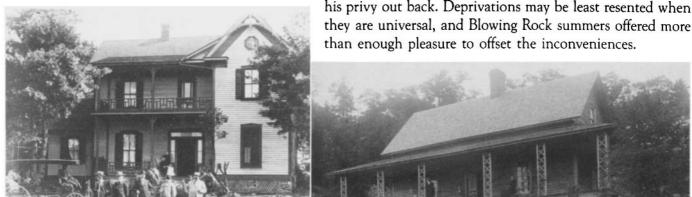
Well water was also an option, but the rocky soil made digging difficult. Below a level of several feet, dynamite had to be used. A charge would be set off, the rubble cleared away, another charge lit, and so on to a depth of fifty feet or more. As the well grew deeper, some lucky workman would have to be lowered in a bucket to plant the charge and light the fuse, then rapidly find himself winched to the surface. The noxious fumes would make deeper work difficult, and pine trees would be cut and used to ream out the gas.

Outhouses, segregated by sex but not race, were an obvious necessity. For season-long use, the same basic method of construction had to be used as was done for wells. The alternative was frequent shifts of location.

Few of the cottagers prepared their own food; a good cook was considered the most basic of servants. Some families brought in large supplies of staples such as flour, sugar, and coffee by wagon at the beginning of the summer. As a young boy John Miles Abernethy even brought an entire summer's milk supply up the Turnpike. He sat in the back of a wagon holding the tether of the family milk cow. More commonly, staples were provided by town stores run by the Holshousers and Millers. Fruits, vegetables, chicken, and dairy products were sold door-to-door by mountain families happy to supplement their income by provisioning the summer residents.

More common than spring houses as a source of refrigeration were ice houses. Sawdust was used as insulation between the walls of these houses, and to a depth of six feet on the floor. Even with recessed floors, they often had to be entered from the outside by ladder. Local families would contract to cut wagonloads of ice from Silver Lake at Chetola in winter, haul them to the ice houses, and bury them in sawdust. When the summer folk arrived, the ice houses would be stocked with a season's worth of refrigeration. Meat or vegetables would be wrapped in paper and buried under the sawdust next to blocks of ice. Sticks identifying the food's location would then be pushed through from above. Dairy products would not stay good for long, but fresh supplies were always available, and the system worked well for other perishables.²⁶

Cottage life was thus both rustic and refined. A cottager could wear fine clothes to a social gathering, but only after first bathing in a tub. The servant who prepared the cottager's meals and waited on him at table also shared



The Boyden Cottage

The Patterson Cottage

. . But How Do You Get Here

For the summer residents, first place had always been half The Lenoir-Blowing Rock road from the foot of the Lenoir were on regular train from beyond the immediate willing to make the rugged

The growth of railroads in Rock to tourists from throughfrom Columbia, Atlanta, even cool mountain breezes. A



getting to Blowing Rock in the the battle — or half the fun. Turnpike provided a maintained mountains. Until Hickory and routes, however, few travellers North Carolina region were horsedrawn trip.

the late 1800s opened Blowing out the southeast. Heat sufferers Florida, could now escape to the railroad across the Blue Ridge

had been discussed well prior to the Civil War. By 1852 a line had extended from Raleigh as far west as Salisbury, but there progress had stopped. The General Assembly chartered a Western North Carolina Railroad with three million dollars in capital, two-thirds to be provided by the state, the rest to come from individuals and counties who stood to gain by its completion. No further construction was undertaken, though, so a second charter was offered two years later. Both efforts remained "paper railroads," as the needed private investors did not materialize. The payoff in development potential was not yet seen as worth the investment; so matters stood throughout the War.

When the conflict ended, however, the railroad edged slowly forward. Tennessee corporations provided impetus to the plodding Western North Carolina railroad by linking up with Atlanta and Mobile. The Western North Carolina line had to get across the mountains to tap into that rail network. In 1880 the line reached Asheville, and two years later it finally connected with the Eastern Tennessee at Paint Rock. A trunk line from Asheville to Spartanburg was completed shortly after, opening the entire mountain resort area to travellers from throughout the muggy south.²⁷

Lenoir was not on the main line of the new railroad, but a narrow gauge spur to Hickory and Chester was completed in 1884. The final leg into Lenoir was not necessarily an easy one. At times, passengers had to dismount from the heavily laden little train and help push it over steep grades.²⁸ Despite its drawbacks, the railroad was swift and luxurious compared to carriage rides of hundreds of miles over dirt roads.

Blowing Rock acquired another rail link shortly afterwards, this one from the west. The Eastern Tennessee & Western North Carolina narrow gauge railroad reached the Cranberry iron mines in 1882. The Linville Land, Manufacturing, and Mining Company of Wilmington, North Carolina (shortly thereafter renamed the less unwieldy and aesthetically more pleasing Linville Improvement Company) was incorporated in 1889, with the dual aims of establishing a resort town and developing the lumber industry.²⁹ The Linville River Railroad began in 1895, running from Cranberry to Linville. The Ritter Lumber Company extended the line to Pineola in 1900, and the Whiting Lumber Company took it to Shulls Mill in 1915-16. The Boone Township finally voted a bond to bring the narrow gauge into that town at public expense in 1918, completing the growth. Collectively, these narrow gauge trains of the Eastern Tennessee & Western North Carolina line were known as "Tweetsie." (The ET & WNC was also referred to by some as the "Eat Taters & Wear No Clothes," an early juxtaposition of modernization and mountain poverty.)³¹

Tweetsie passenger traffic was mostly local. Lenoir was a strategic point for tourists, and they counted on the "Hack Line" run by Henkel, Craig and Company to get them to Blowing Rock. Residents of the Lenoir area had the



advantage of being able to send their luggage with their servants for the summer ahead the day before they made the trip themselves. Visitors from further away could either lay over in Lenoir for a day or two, or survive without their baggage for the extra length of time it took draft horses pulling the heavily laden wagons up the mountain.³²

The most common transportation was a two-seated surrey pulled by two horses. This gave room for a driver and three passengers. Larger three- or four-seated surreys pulled by four horses or mules were also available. More efficient yet less comfortable were the six-passenger stage coaches. Experienced stage riders learned to rush to the forward facing seats. Riding uphill backwards in the enclosed carriage was known to cause coach-sickness among those with weak constitutions.

Two toll gates had to be passed on the Lenoir-Blowing Turnpike. The first was about five miles north of Lenoir at the end of the first long rise, where a creek cut off to the Yadkin. Local traffic or that going towards Mulberry headed off here. The second was by the straits of the Yadkin close to Blowing Rock. The tolls were collected year-round, and were prorated by type of vehicle. At the turn-of-the-century, a two-horse wagon cost 25 cents, a one-horse wagon was



Blowing Rock in the 1880s—from the papers of Dr. Jethro Rumple

20 cents, 10 cents would get a horseback rider through, and pedestrians were free. When the first automobiles came, their rate was \$1.33

The trip could take a long day, or be broken up by an overnight stay at boarding houses such as Nelson's and Curtis', located at about the halfway point. Because the road was dirt, weather conditions made travel time extremely variable. It was not unusual for passengers to take turns walking to relieve the horses throughout the trip.³⁴

Henkel and Craig did a booming business carrying tourists to Blowing Rock at \$2.50 per carriage. By 1892, they had livery stables at the Green Park Hotel, the Watauga Hotel, and the Blowing Rock Hotel where they cared for privately owned horses, handled local rentals to hotel guests and cottagers, and coordinated Lenoir-bound traffic.³⁵

The lumber industry accounted for a major portion of the turnpike activity. Local rivers could not be used



for floating out timber, so the largest trees were marked individually, cut "on the stump," and sawed into planks by portable mills. After drying reduced the weight of the lumber, it was loaded into ox- or horse-drawn wagon, and taken to Lenoir. There, it was used primarily in the rapidly-growing furniture industry. Broyhill, Harper, and Bernhardt business interests thus

helped provide Blowing Rock with economic growth separate from tourism in the depressed post-Civil War years when outside investment was most needed.³⁶

A major boost to the local road network and economy was also given by the Linville development. Hugh MacRae had purchased 16,000 acres of land around Linville shortly after graduating from M.I.T. in 1885. He and his father Donald were instrumental in founding the original Linville Corporation, and Hugh quickly realized that its success would be dependent on good roads to the outside world. In 1889, men under the direction of MacRae and fellow Engineer S.T. Kelsey started work on the Yonahlossee Trail (or "Trail of the Black Bear") from Linville to Blowing Rock, following the route which would later become U.S. 221.³⁷

Men eager for a cash-paying job walked as much as twelve miles daily to work a twelve-hour day for 25 cents to 75 cents in wages. Mules and oxen carried out dirt loosened by men with pick and shovel, aided by the strategic dynamite blast. Drag pans levelled the road bed. The entire eighteen mile road was completed in just under two years, at the remarkably low cost of one thousand dollars a mile.³⁸

Arise...And Flee To The Mountains!

With the expansion of railroad lines into Caldwell County, new efforts were initiated to inform potential tourists of the salubrious effects of Blowing Rock's environment. The S.A.L. Magmagundi, a monthly publication from Platsmouth, Va. dedicated to the Seaboard Air Line and the agricultural and industrial interests along the S.A.L.'s southeastern route, issued a rousing invitation of sorts in their July Edition in 1897. The following represents a condensed version of the issue and illustrates the S.A.L.'s titilating attempt to inform the public that



Travelers pause over double culvert on the Yonahlossee Road.

transportation had extended into the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. And if readers knew what was good for them, they would certainly take advantage of it.

HAPPINESS FOR ALL

Mountain Retreats in Western North Carolina Where Torrid Heat is Subdued by Cooling Breezes and the Mosquito Pest is Unknown.

Pure Air that Refreshes and Invigorates Like Wine-Cold, Crystal Water Trickling from Sequestered Rocky Glens.

Billowy Verdure of Boundless Forests in the Blue Range-Lovely Valleys and Brawling Streams-Incomparable Diversity of Scenic Splendor.

Everything in Earth, Air, Sky and Water to Enhance Human Health and Comfort-Making Outdoor Life in Midsummer and Autumn a Rapturous Delight.

Lenoir, Blowing Rock and Linville-United by Enchanting Drives over Excellent Roads,
under Majestic Overarching Trees,
through Groves of Gorgeous
Laurel, Azalea and Rhododendron Blooms.

Ample Hotel Accommodations at Low Rates; Superb, Well Trained Horses, Careful Drivers and Easy Riding Conveyances.

Lofty Peaks for the Climber, Spotted Trout for the Angler, Game for the Hunter, Repose for the Invalid-A Glorious, Good Time for Everybody.

Recreation, as well as rest, is essential to the preservation of health and the maintenance of that buoyancy of spirit which builds up shattered nerves, restores flagging energies and conduces to longevity. Act in the living present, and don't wait until you are suddenly knocked over and into an eternity before you have half lived out the days God allotted as your destined portion to make the most and enjoy. 'Arise, gird up your loins, and flee to the mountains!' and as that may seem a little indefinite, we add: 'The mountains of the Blue Ridge in Western North Carolina.' There every inspiration of pure air exhilarates the lungs and reddens the blood. There every copious draft of clear cold water from mountain springs refreshes and stimulates the functional powers. There the muscles are quickened and jaded nerves keyed up by outdoor climbing, walking, trout fishing, sight-seeing. There one's sense of the beautiful is gratified with a luxuriance of forest plumage and magnificence of flowering plants and shrubs that language is powerless to describe. There the imagination is stirred and the heart moved to its profoundest depth as you survey from dizzy heights, the illimitable landscape spread before you — valley, stream, and mountain, range piled on range.

The facilities of direct transportation from northern cities are better now than ever before. Mr. G.W.F. Harper, president of the Carolina and Northwestern Railroad, is an able, liberal-minded, up-to-date executive officer, as well as a genial, universally popular gentleman. With the cooperation of Tom Anderson, our wide awake general passenger agent, arrangements have been perfected under which through tickets are now sold from all points to and from Blowing Rock. Road track and equipment is excellent, and service in every respect first class. A stately colored woman is in attendance to anticipate every want. Iced water and nice toilet rooms, everything cleanly and sweet, and only a quarter extra. From such a vehicle of peaceful comfort and comparative seclusion, it is no ordinary pleasure to catch fleeting glimpses of pretty villages, rose-powdered homes, cherry and mulberry trees aflame with fruit, fine farms, thrifty orchards and gardens.

If the passenger is in a rushing hurry, the regular stage leaving from Lenoir at about 1:30 p.m., will take him through, 'post haste' arriving in Blowing Rock at an early hour in the evening. But it is much more pleasant and satisfactory, and a little more expensive, to take a private conveyance and make the journey of twenty-two miles leisurely. The well-known firm of Henkel, Craig, and Company, of Lenoir furnish every desired style of vehicle and horses at reasonble rates. In addition to the stage line they employ a double daily mule team for the transportation of the trunks and heavy baggage of tourists and summer visitors. Their stock (part of which is stabled at Blowing Rock) consists of 150 horses (the majority Kentucky bred), all more or less actively engaged during the season. These animals are nothing like the worn, jaded specimens of many livery outfits, but well fed, strong, spirited, well groomed, thoroughly trained, fast going, and as handsome in appearance as free in action. Henkel knows horses and his stock is carefully selected and maintained at the very top notch of service-ability. You may prefer a carriage, but we recommend a spring wagon with tarpaulin cover and sides (for protection against sudden showers) affording ample space for occupants to stretch their limbs, as well as for hand bags and baskets for plants, ferns and shrubs, which visitors always like to take home for transplanting as souvenirs and living mementoes of the wonderful scenes and places they witness for the first and perhaps the last time. If you want a capital driver, by all means secure 'Billy.' He is a jewel in ebony—faithful, sober, careful, civil, good natured and obliging. Moreover, he is familiar with every foot of the road, knows every mountain, valley and river by name, and nearly every plant by its common if not its botanical designation. Never presuming he imperceptibly grows in favor on acquaintance.

The turnpike between Lenoir and Blowing Rock was built in 1847 by a company organized by the Hon. James C. Harper, formerly a member of congress. The road is kept up by tolls and is in excellent condition. For several miles after leaving Lenoir it winds around hills and through valleys whose topography and verdant fields unmistakably attest the fertility of the soil and its quick susceptibility to the growth of all kinds of vegetation.

A few miles further on, we come to a little village (or pretty nucleus of one) named Patterson. It is practically owned and its affairs conducted by S.F. Harper, a brother of Major Harper of Lenoir. He has established and operates here a large cotton and wool factory and plant, employing seventy-five hands. Pursuing our journey a few miles further, the ascending grade becomes more apparent, although the roadway in its sinuous windings is never difficult. We proceed under the protecting shadows of lofty centuried trees — the hemlock, chestnut, oak, poplar, birch, hickory, elm. The beautiful laurel is profuse in her gifts, strewing our path with blossoms. As we draw nearer to our destination the surroundings assume a bolder, grander aspect. From "Cook's Place," about six miles this side of Blowing Rock, we overlook an uninterrupted and comprehensive view of Mulberry Valley, showing Ginger Rock, Hawk's Bill, Table Rock, and a succession of ranges whose remoter outlines fade into the horizon. The view from Cone Hill (one mile distant), reveals the lovely outlines of the Yadkin valley pursuing its tortuous course through massive mountain ranges. Within the village limits of Blowing Rock is another transcendent vision—the St. John's valley as seen from Cathcart's cottage.

The village of Blowing Rock consists of a series of detached hotels, cottages, and dwellings, stretching along the winding roadway a distance of two miles. The permanent population is about 300, which is increased to three or four times that number during the summer. Blowing Rock derives its rather unromantic name for the reason that the funnel shaped chasm or gorge of which it is the apex compresses the westerly winds, rushing them up and over the rock with considerable force when there is little atmospheric disturbance elsewhere. From the dizzy altitude of this precipice, the view is grandly beautiful, beautifully

grand. It is not surprising that this so called 'Land of the Sky' should exert an irresistible fascination on those who have once yielded to its attractions.

The return from Blowing Rock to Lenoir is like a return from fairyland, or the exploration of a new, untried, and beautiful world. We can wish our readers, one and all, no greater happiness than to profit by the experience.

A Town is Born

Improved access into Blowing Rock raised tourism to a booming business. Beside the boarding houses and cottages sprang up large hotels: the Green Park, Watauga, and Blowing Rock Hotels, and others. The local citizens quickly realized that this growth called for a new form of government. A delegation was selected to go to Raleigh, and their petitions were successful. In 1889 the General Assembly incorporated the Town of Blowing Rock under the following charter:

City Is Chartered In March of 1889

CHAPTER 199, PRIVATE LAWS, 1889, AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE TOWN OF BLOWING ROCK, IN THE COUNTY OF WATAUGA: THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA DO ENACT:

- Sec. 1. That the town of Blowing Rock in the County of Watauga be and the same is hereby incorporated by the name and style of the Town of Blowing Rock, and it shall be subject to all the provisions of law now existing in reference to incorporated towns.
- Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of said town be as follows: Three-fourths of a mile in every direction from W.M. Morris' store-house.
- Sec. 3. That the officers shall consist of a mayor and three commissioners, and that until their successors are elected and qualified the following named gentlemen shall constitute said officers: J.B. Clarke, Mayor; I.N. Corpening, W.M. Morris and Dr. Charles Carter, the commissioners, with full power to act until their successors are qualified.
- Sec. 4. There shall be an election for officers in this act on the first Monday in May, one thousand eight hundred and eight-nine, and every year thereafter, under the same restrictions that county and State elections are held. All male citizens over twenty-one years of age, who have resided in the State twelve months and in the county ninety days and in the town thirty days previous to the day of election, shall be entitled to vote at said election.
- Sec. 5. That said commissioners shall have no power or authority to grant any one license to sell any spirituous liquors within the corporate limits of said town; Provided, that malt liquors (beer and wine) may be sold under regulations prescribed by the town authorities by paying a tax not exceeding twenty-five dollars per annum.
- Sec. 6. That said commissioners shall have and exercise all corporate powers and duties as are conferred upon commissioners of incorporated towns under chapter sixty-two of The Code, and in addition thereto they shall have power to pass by-laws, rules and regulations for the good government of said town, not inconsistent with the laws of the United States and this State, and to impose all fines and penalties for the violation of town ordinances and collect the same; and that said chapter shall be applicable in every respect to said town.
- Sec. 7. That all fines collected for the violation of any ordinance of said town shall be applied to the benefit of said town.
- Sec. 8. This act shall be in force from and after its ratification. Ratified the 11th day of March, A.D., 1889.

Blowing Rock elected its first mayor to be Joseph Bogle Clarke, a farmer and merchant who had moved up from Lenoir in 1871. Civil War records show service as a lieutenant, but he was known affectionately as Commodore Clarke. He had been prominent in the community for some time; he took the first census in 1886 for the newly established Blowing Rock Township (a county administrative district).

Mayor Clarke must have added quite a splash of color to the new town. He is said to have dressed properly in black frock coat throughout the summer months while the tourists were present, but to have gone about in short sleeves all winter. He is also reported to have been a Swedenborgian; that is, a follower of the eighteenth century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. Among other things, Swedenborg believed in direct communication with other—worldly spirits. While nominally Christian, it was hardly an orthodox faith.³⁹

Clarke could be uninhibited in his personal life, too. While mayor, he once awoke to a drink, or perhaps several, and decided that the town was just a bit too quiet that morning. To rectify the situation, he stampeded



Uncle Joe Clarke

a herd of cattle down Main Street. Of course, as mayor he could hardly let such activity go unchecked, so the next day he called mayor's court into session, convicted himself of having been drunk and disorderly, and fined himself \$1 and court costs. 40

As a matter-of-fact, the Commodore was faced with a drinking problem from the day Blowing Rock was incorporated: not his own, but the town's. The town charter allowed its commissioners to regulate and tax beer and wine sales. In an early county vote, the township had voted against prohibition in 1886.⁴¹ Under county local-option laws, the Watauga County Board of Commissioners could therefore issue saloon licenses for Blowing Rock with such controls as the town saw fit to impose.

A pro-alcohol mayor, charter, and electorate did not settle the issue. The same session of the General Assembly which chartered the town had also issued a charter for the Skyland Institute, a private school located between Blowing Rock and Green Park. *Its* charter prohibited any sale of alcohol within two miles of the school. As luck would have it, this conveniently included the entire town.

Thornton Ingle received a county license to sell beer in Blowing Rock for twelve months beginning July 1, 1889, but was apparently persuaded to delay opening his saloon pending a resolution of the controversy.⁴² An editorial in the *Lenoir News-Topic* the following summer commenting on the situation has a curiously contemporary ring:

The burning question is that of 'beer or no beer' — whether or not a saloon to sell beer shall be opened. The argument begins upon the expediency of it, the advocates claiming that a saloon will be an attraction and draw visitors who would not come without it, while the opponents stoutly claim that the saloon would drive away many of the best class of visitors and would attract a very unsavory class. The advocates boldly assert that no prohibition summer resort has ever been a success and that Blowing Rock will never amount to anything until it has a saloon. The opponents flatly deny this and insist that the opening of a saloon will be the death-knell of Blowing Rock as a popular resort.⁴³

The first regular election was won by Joe Clarke and the 'beer men,' and Ingle opened his saloon in 1890.⁴⁴ H.C. Martin, Clarke's business partner and another "wet," became mayor the following year.⁴⁵ In 1892, however, the anti-alcohol forces got their chance.

Filmore Coffey was elected as a "dry" mayor in 1892. Unfortunately for his supporters, he moved away before his term expired. Rather than call for a new election, Coffey appointed his friend W.H. Weedon to fill out his term. Weedon decided that the Skyland Institute charter took precedence over the town's, and that the "illegal" beer sales previously allowed had invalidated the town's legal standing as a corporate body. As acting mayor of the ex-town, he simply refused to hold new elections.

This was too much for Clarke and his supporters to swallow. They went to Watauga County Sheriff Hayes, and convinced him to call a special election. Joe Clarke won that vote in 1893, and Blowing Rock was a town once again.⁴⁶

Early Laws and Civic Concerns

The townspeople of Blowing Rock had many other matters on their minds besides alcohol. The earliest surviving town ordinances, printed in the *Watauga Democrat* on May 14, 1896, illustrate the citizens' concerns.

- I. It is unlawful to use any boisterous or profane language, or engage in any kind of affray or fight in the corporate limits of the town of Blowing Rock, and any person convicted of such shall be subject to a fine of \$3.00.
- II. It is unlawful for any person or persons to put up on the streets, crossings or sidewalks of the town any obstruction to public passage, or to put upon the streets any filth or to otherwise injure or impair the streets or sidewalks, and any person so offending, upon conviction, shall be subject to a fine of \$1.00.
- III. It is unlawful to discharge any firearms within the corporate limits of the town, except as it is necessary in butchering, and any person or persons so offending shall, upon conviction, be fined \$1.00 and costs for such offense.
- IV. That all men living within the corporate limits of the town between the ages of 18 and 45 years shall be required to work on the streets of the town upon notice of the street overseer ten days in each year, and any person failing or refusing to work as required by this ordinance shall, upon conviction, be fined \$1.00 and costs for each day he shall fail to work.
- V. That all peddlers or salesmen shall, before selling or offering any goods, wares, or merchandise, obtain from the mayor license to exercise their trade in said incorporation, and for such license they shall be required to pay the sum of \$5.00 for each day or part of a day that they may engage in their business. Persons violating this ordinance shall, upon conviction, be fined \$10.00 and costs.
- VI. It shall be unlawful to hitch, ride, or drive on the sidewalks, or hitch to the shade trees and plank fences. Any person so offending shall be fined \$1.00 and costs for each offense.
- VII. It shall be unlawful to deface or mutilate any signs, legal notices, or street lamps in said town. Any person who shall be convicted of the same shall be fined \$1.00 and costs for each offense.
- VIII. All privies and hog pens shall be kept clean and all garbage, filth or offal shall be burned or buried. Any person failing to comply with the requirements of this ordinance shall upon conviction be fined \$2.00 and costs.
 - IX. Any person found drunk within the corporate limits of the town shall upon conviction be fined \$2.00 and costs.
 - X. All shows or slight of hand performances or other entertainments for reward as taxed by the laws of the State shall pay a tax of \$5.00 for each performance.
 - XI. That no stock or geese be permitted to run at large within the incorporate limits of the town; all stock and geese running at large within the limits of said incorporation after the ratification of these ordinances shall be impounded by the marshal, and shall be released only on the payment of 25 cts each for horses and cattle and 10 cts each for hogs, goats, sheep, and geese, and cost for feeding the same. If stock be impounded by the marshal and not redeemed within three days, the

same shall be advertised for ten days and sold at public outcry to pay fines and costs.

- XII. Any person who shall remove or cause to be removed any stock or geese from the impounding lot without having first paid all charges or having obtained leave from the keeper of the impounding lot shall, upon conviction, be fined \$2.50 and cost for each offense.
- XIII. It shall be unlawful to sell spirituous liquors or any other intoxicating drinks within the corporate limits of the town. Any person so offending, shall, upon conviction, be fined \$5.00 and costs for each offense.
- XIV. It shall be unlawful to rock or in any way deface or injure any building, occupied or unoccupied, within the incorporation. Any person so offending shall, upon conviction, be fined \$1.00 and cost for each offense.
- XV. Any person failing to pay the fines and costs shall be imprisoned or put to work on the streets of said town until he works out the value of his fines and costs.
- XVI. The marshal shall have the right to remit fines in part under certain circumstances.

The back-and-forth nature of the alcohol dispute is reflected in law XIII: in 1896, Blowing Rock once again became dry. It would stay dry until 1899, when the county commissioners unexpectedly issued a beer sale license for the town. Anti-saloon activists successfully petitioned for a local-option election in the township, and alcohol sales were defeated in September 1899 by a vote of 66-4.⁴⁷

This widespread turnaround echoed a state-wide temperance movement involving local ministers and newspapers fighting to make prohibition a moral priority. The prohibition included sale and not ownership as illegal, therefore drinking tourists could bring liquor in from South Carolina for private consumption. Long-term summer visitors were often interested in "civilizing" the mountaineer. Banning alcohol was part of a social movement that included good schools, recreation facilities, and public libraries. A vital force behind this movement, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, held its meetings at the Skyland Institute, a charitable private school. In opposition were the drinking local citizens who could purchase homemade tax-free liquor from their neighborhood manufacturers. Prohibition satisfied the moral reformer, while drinking continued behind the scenes.⁴⁸ County-wide prohibition soon resulted, and in 1908 the state went dry. In that election, Blowing Rock Township had the strongest pro-liquor vote in the county, favoring prohibition by only 40-17. In comparison, Boone's vote was for prohibition by 200 to 10.⁴⁹

Ordinances II, IV, VI, VII, VIII, XIV, and XV, all relate to town maintenance and repairs and address the responsibility of each citizen because Blowing Rock had no public works department at this time. The marshal was in charge of road repairs, and all citizens were required to contribute their labor. No garbage collection service existed until 1914, so waste had to be disposed of privately.⁵⁰ The growth of a tourist town was critically tied to sanitation and these laws addressed that fact.

Hog Wild to Pigpen

Probably the single most important issue to the average Blowing Rock native at this time was the status of his livestock. The 1880 census listed sixty-two households in the township; of these, forty-seven listed their head-of-household occupations as farmers or farm laborers. Mountain farms were generally small and subsistence-oriented. Some vegetables were sold locally, but cabbage was the only major exported crop. Livestock, especially swine, was a different matter.

Hogs were a perfect cash crop. Traditionally they were allowed to run wild all spring and summer to forage for themselves. In the fall, they would be rounded up, driven *en masse* to Lenoir, and sorted by brand or other marking. A few animals would be kept over the winter for breeding purposes, but except for winter feed, hogs were low maintenance and all profit.

Blowing Rock's growth as a tourist town changed the whole system of hog breeding. Refined flatlanders

objected to stumbling over pigs and cattle in the streets. The ladies couldn't reconcile themselves to manure on their high-button shoes. Proponents of tourist growth, including merchants such as mayors Joe Clarke and H.C. Martin, pushed for stock laws to fence in the animals. Tourists and those who made their money from tourism were pleased by this movement; the cash-poor farmer who would have to buy feed for animals while the God-given natural feed of the forests went to waste, was furious.

The stock law movement was especially painful to farmers because of a region-wide depression throughout the 1890s. H.E. Miller of the *Shelby Aurora* visited Blowing Rock in 1889, and noted that "a farmer is considered successful if he makes \$150 net annual profit." The editors of the *Watauga Democrat* lamented in 1893 that "At no time in the history of Watauga County since the late war has the circulation of money among our people been so meager as it is at this time. Our business men are much oppressed for the want of money, and a hard struggle is going on between creditor and debtor." In dismay they concluded, "It is easy to discover a downcast, dejected, discouraged, and we might say disgusted appearance in the faces of men all over the county who are trying to tide their business over the sea of 'hard times.' "52

This situation led some farmers to leave the county for better prospects elsewhere. Local newspapers regularly carried large advertisements for trains heading west,⁵³ and few issues of the *Watauga Democrat* in the 1890s were complete without letters from "Watauga boys" in Oklahoma, Montana, Idaho, or Oregon. The paper commented, "The exit of quite a number of our good and substantial citizens from Watauga of late, and more to follow in the near future, is something to be deplored indeed."⁵⁴

Many of those who remained at home became politically active. One positive outcome was the formation of the Farmer's Alliance, which worked statewide to improve conditions and nearly developed into a third political party before leaguing instead with populist Democrats. In January of 1890, the Watauga chapter had nineteen suballiances, including one at Blowing Rock, and a total of 700 members (507 male, 193 female). Their two major concerns on a state level were lowering train freight charges (of comparatively little interest to rail-less Wataugans), and increasing wholesale prices to merchants. The "cross-roads merchants" were roundly condemned by area farmers, who claimed that the retailers were making as much as 100% profit. The Alliance encouraged cooperatives and put what pressure they could on the merchants, but the hard times continued. 56

In 1897, the *Watauga Democrat* remained pessimistic. "Our opinion now is that we in Watauga will see the hardest times next year that we have ever seen financially. During this fall our people have sold all their cattle and sheep, not even saving our cows and heifers. What we will have next year to sell for money is a serious question to consider."⁵⁷

Vegetable crops were not the answer as those prices, too, stayed depressed, and little profit remained after a trip to Lenoir. In a pro-railroad bond editorial, the *Democrat* stated, "The road from here to Lenoir is now lined with produce wagons from this county, and at last reports, cabbages were worth on that market 35 to 50 cts per hundred, and apples from 15 to 50 cts per bushel. Now, the average expense of one load of produce from here to Lenoir is at least \$5.00, to say nothing of the wear and tear on wagons and teams." Later that same fall of 1897, conditions failed to improve and the paper reported, "The cabbage market is very badly crowded at Lenoir, and the prices are not much above the pickage per load." 59

Against this background, the growth of Blowing Rock's tourist economy was all the more significant. Vital tourist money was concentrated in the boarding houses and hotels of the Village, but country dwellers benefitted through increased local sales of stock and produce, and through construction and service-oriented jobs. The *Watauga Democrat* noted the increase in Blowing Rock tourism after the 1891 season, "Rich people are taking an interest in the place and there is no telling what may turn up at any time. It is estimated that the visitors have spent at least \$75,000 here during the summer. The liverymen claim to have taken in \$12,000 of this amount. Of course the greatest part will be distributed among the people of Watauga and will help them a great deal." Just how much gain the average farmer received is open to question, although it was probably more than he recognized. In the short run, it must have looked as though the village was prospering while the outlying farmer continued to struggle. In any case, the abundant influx of fresh cash demanded a revision of any laws that might detract from the new industry.

Stock laws were traditionally written with the farmers' interests at heart. Any voting district could pass a stock law, but by doing so they were actually committing themselves to financing construction of a fence around their territory

to keep the animals out.61 Such a fence was locally described as, "plow horse high, stud bull strong, and root hog wide."

The cost of fencing in Blowing Rock was a major sticking point for opponents of the law. One argued in 1892, "It will cost to build one mile of said fence \$70.40 cts., and to enclose Blowing Rock township it will cost twenty-five times that amount, as it is twenty-five miles around the township, which will be \$1760. Now, we have \$53,453 worth of real estate according to our last assessment. There are about 75 polls and about \$21,000 worth of personal property (the real estate only being taxable for stock law fences). At 25 cents on the \$100 worth of land, we see that the \$53,453 worth will only amount to \$133.63. Now deduct this amount from cost of building fence and you see we still owe the parties who build the fence \$1,626.37. Who will build the fence and wait so long for pay?"

On one level the letter frankly stated the economic condition of Blowing Rock. The plight of the everyday farmer, however, could be read between the lines. "The above is one reason why I oppose the stock law, and another is, it will be injurious to the raising of sheep in our county; and still another is, it will hurt the poor man who has no land. He will be forced to move, or keep no stock, for the pasturing would soon break him up.

"Let me say in conclusion that if the people in town want their incorporation law, let them have it as the law directs, and not ask the people to fence up an entire township to keep the hogs off the sidewalks."62

The Weedon-Clarke dispute of 1893 was debated as much as alcohol sales. A Weedon supporter condemned the Clarke and Martin leadership of 1889-1892 by arguing: "They levied unnecessarily heavy taxes and permitted the maintenance of rum shops, pig styes and sundry other nuisances within the town limits to the great disparagement of the sanitary interest and the fair fame of our charming and growing mountain resort. And while the hogs nearby [ie, owned by prosperous towndwellers] flourished and waxed fat, the children of our citizens and visitors suffered, and many returned home having partially or entirely lost the benefits of their summer vacation. If loose pigs are a nuisance, how much worse is the sight and smell of a downtown sty!"⁶³

The Lenoir News-Topic saw things differently. It stated, "Weedon and his crowd want to do away with the corporation, and let hogs take possession of the place, while the newly elected officers are in favor of corporation and want to have good laws. It is not often that such a condition of things happens, and all about hogs or no hogs, corporation or no corporation."⁶⁴

The answer which Blowing Rock chose to this dilemma is clear by the ordinances of 1896. While requiring the individual farmer to restrain his own stock may seem obvious to later generations, it marked a reversal of hundreds of years of common law and practice. God's bounty was now off-limits to the poor stock raiser who needed it most, a sacrifice allowing tourism to flourish.

Blowing Rock's stock laws were reaffirmed by a township vote in 1900,65 and followed by similar county action in 1901.66 Enforcement was generally lax at first, and often the subject of annoyed editorials in the *Watauga Democrat*, but the open range was gone for good. In the battle between hogs and tourists, the mountain farmer was the real loser.



The beginning of a community

Meandering Main Street



Main Street in 1905



Cicero Miller in front of Miller General Store

Downtown Blowing Rock during the first twenty years of incorporation was a mix of businesses and private homes. Main Street then as now was the heart of the Village. In 1923, a disastrous fire swept along the east side of Main Street from Sunset Avenue to Morris Street. The origin of the fire was Jim Lentz's Company Store. The volunteer fire department had not yet been formed, and no buildings could be saved. A visitor strolling through downtown eighty years ago, fifteen years before the fire, would have viewed the following scene.⁶⁷

At the north end of Main Street, at the foot of Morningside Drive just around the corner on the Linville Road, was the Robbins' blacksmith shop, run by Ed Robbins and his father. Ed Robbins later became a preacher at the Baptist Church, and was mayor at the time of the fire. The Baptist Church was next. At the site of Pitts' service station stood the Miller General Store.⁶⁸

Where the library now stands was a livery stable connected with the Watauga Hotel, one of the three operated by Henkel, Craig and Company.

The Watauga Hotel occupied most of the current town park. The main building was a two-story structure sitting in the middle of the property. Flanking it on both sides was a row of two-room rental cottages which opened onto a common porch. The building housing the Jenkins Realty Company is the last surviving cottage from the Hotel.

Next came the Martin House, which still stands. Started as a private home, it had extensive additions made to furnish it as a boarding house. The Martins also ran a hotel in Lenoir.

At the Laurel Lane entrance to Mayview Park stood another livery stable, run at one time by Mr. Jim Sudderth. This was before the Mayview development had begun.

The next two houses, examples of summer cottages, were the Hayes House which was previously occupied by the Edmondsons, and the white house on the corner belonging to Colonel and Mrs. Ogdon Edwards, ranking summer socialites. The Cordons' home, later damaged heavily by fire, was extensively rebuilt and can now be enjoyed as Tijuana Fats Restaurant.

The Schenck house that follows is still standing. It was owned by Confederate Major Henry Franklin Schenck, one of Blowing Rock's first cottagers after the War. His son, John F. Schenck, Sr., lived in the house for nearly sixty years, beginning in the 1880s. The Schencks were successful owner-operators of the Cleveland Cotton Mills, and among the Village's longest continuous residents.⁶⁹

The Presbyterian Church was originally a white frame building on the site where the beautiful stone church now stands. The next two buildings were residences. The first, no longer standing, was briefly the home of the



The Hayes Cottage

artist Elliott Daingerfield. The Reverend Dr. Rumple lived in the next home. This building was moved back on the lot and added to when it was later converted to an inn, but the original structure has been preserved.

The Methodist Church was next on the street. Further up the hill were more businesses. A gentleman by the name of Peoples ran a cabinet shop where Stories' Carpet is now. Next to him was Mr. Watts' shoe shop. Across the street from where Chestnut Drive enters Main Street were the livery stables for the Blowing Rock Hotel located on the east side of the street. Past the stables was the Weedon home place (the original Harper property), and, near the junction of Main Street and by-pass 321, was the Skyland Institute for girls founded by Miss Emily Prudden.

On the other side of the street heading towards town stood the Blowing Rock Hotel. This hotel offered guest cottages on the hotel grounds for visitors seeking more privacy than the main building allowed. A few of these cottages, converted and renovated to private residences, still stand along Main Street near Chestnut.

Just before the current Episcopal Church stood the Nowells' boarding house. The private residence of a Mr. Spencer, a York, South Carolina lawyer, was located where the Episcopal Church is now.

Dr. Reeves ran a drug store on Main Street which no longer stands. His home, the Reeves House, still exists further back on the original Reeves property. Reeves' Drug Store may have been a hard working business by day, but by night the place transformed into a buzz of social activity. Dances were held there every Saturday night, with music supplied by local string bands. Entire families would attend from the year-round community. Children too young to stay up through the dances would be wrapped in blankets and set on the counter out of the way to sleep as best they could.⁷⁰

Craigs' Grocery Store and a general store run by the Hall brothers and by Mr. Hayes came next. The original Episcopal Church and Reading Room, with its distinctive bell tower, stood about where Sonny's Grill is now. Rev. William Savage, the Episcopal rector, maintained the only public library here for about ten years beginning in 1902. The Blowing Rock library dates back to books salvaged from the Reading Room in 1918 by Alice Wood, who cleaned them up and donated them to the public school.⁷¹

North of the Episcopal Church were Dr. Rabey's drug store, a photography studio belonging to Wiley Vannoy, and the two-story Mercantile Company of Thomas Coffey. Where First Union Bank now stands was the large Holshouser General Store, run by W.L. "Will" Holshouser and his brother, Lunce. At the time of the fire Lunce and his wife lived above the store. It was the last building to the north to escape the flames.

Across Sunset Drive from Holshousers' stood the Blowing Rock Bank, which boasts Joe Clarke, Dr. Calvin Parlier, and George M. Sudderth among its founders. The Joe Clarke property extended from the bank nearly to Maple Street; the mayor lived here with his wife. Just before Maple Street was the barber shop of Henry Coffey.

Life in Blowing Rock: Fancy and Fact

A wide social gulf existed between the summer and year-round residents of Blowing Rock, but this did not keep the two groups from sharing the Village in friendship. It was only natural that wealthy cottagers and Appalachian farmers would live differently and find separate entertainment.

A less pronounced gap was found between the cottagers and the hotel guests. Cottager social life was more formal since a family up for the summer was much more likely to bring a full entourage of servants than shorter duration hotel dwellers. The cottagers were also apt to be wealthier, as befitted a class able to afford two (or more) homes and the leisure time to enjoy them.



Dr. Reeves Drug Store in 1898



The original Episcopal Church and Reading Room



This 1865 photograph is of the Holshouser and Edmisten families who were pioneers in Blowing Rock.



W.L. "Will" Holshouser's General Store



Blowing Rock Bank



The Hughes Estate

The first showplaces of the mountains were occupied by the Cones of Baltimore, Stringfellows of Alabama, and Hughes of Charleston. The development of the Cone Estate by the textile magnate Moses Cone during the 1890s until his untimely death in 1908 is discussed more fully in a separate chapter. Suffice it to say that he provided homes and jobs for dozens of mountain families, as well as religious and educational facilities. Moses Cone was a philanthropist in the truest sense of the word. Appropriately, his wife Bertha, as the mistress of Flat Top Manor, received the respect due her. She did little extensive entertaining, but it was *de rigeur* to begin any summer social season by calling on Mrs. Cone.⁷²

W.W. Stringfellow provided the finances to develop the Estes boarding house into the private estate, Chetola. The two families worked together for about ten years, with the Stringfellows purchasing the property in the late 1890s. Susie Stringfellow was an active hostess, and Chetola was the site of large parties, often with Japanese lanterns strung throughout the lawn. Chetola was also a popular riding and fishing destination for daytime recreation.⁷³

The Hughes house was the site of the most liberal parties. Cocktail parties as such were rarely held among the summer residents before World War I. Alcohol was available locally, but was not acceptable at the Cones' and only discreetly at Chetola. Drinks were actually served by the Hughes, however. To add to the air of daring, the frequent parties were not hosted by Mrs. Hughes, who was often ill, but by the vivacious Mrs. Buist from Charleston, who made extended visits to the Hughes household. The Hughes had no children, and their imposing home was torn down in 1979 to make room at the Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds.⁷⁴

The cottager social scene revolved primarily around its longest summer residents, the women of the families. Even wealthy men needed to spend a good part of each summer supervising business concerns. Their time at Blowing Rock was often restricted to long weekends and an occasional week or two of vacation, while the women generally stayed in the cool mountains for an entire summer.

This gave the cottager women the most contact with the local mountaineers. Mary Nelson Carter, the wife of Dr. Charles Carter, is a case in point. In the late 1880s she began the Lend-A-Hand Library from a small building on the Carter property, which she staffed herself for four hours each afternoon. Her major interest was in children's education, and most of the library's hundred -odd books were for children. She also taught sewing skills to the youngsters, and organized Mothers' Meetings for local women. At these weekly gatherings, Mrs. Carter taught moneymaking crafts and nutrition.⁷⁵

Mrs. Ogden Edwards was another long-time summer visitor interested in reaching out to the local people. A letter written by a year-round resident reveals Mrs. Edwards' effort to make the Christmas of 1893 a blessed event for all. "The young people have had a few candy stews and quiltings and the Mt. Bethel, Skyland, and Presbyterian Sunday Schools had a combined Christmas tree at Mt. Bethel Church, on Friday after Christmas, at which 'Santa Claus' distributed good things with a lavish hand. Mrs. Edwards, who we all look upon now as one of us, although her home is in Alabama, also distributed quite a number of Christmas gifts, consisting of everything nice from a toy, to very useful house-hold articles, that she and some of her friends, out of the goodness of their hearts, provided for people in this community, whose circumstances are such, that they cannot provide the nice things, to cheer the hearts of both old and young for this joyous time." The summer of the provided the nice things, to cheer the hearts of both old and young for this joyous time."

Life was not all partying and philanthropy for these people. Horseback riding, pleasure walking, picnics, gardening, and camping were all an integral part of summer vacation. The biggest daily gathering was at Holshousers' store in late afternoon when the mail arrived from Lenoir. Year-round and seasonal folk would gather to gossip and discover what the post had brought.⁷⁷

Three large hotels provided a more structured social life for their guests. The Watauga Hotel was the first to open, on July 1, 1884.⁷⁸ The Blowing Rock Hotel followed on June 17, 1889,⁷⁹ and the elegant Green Park Hotel welcomed its first guests in late June of 1891.⁸⁰ Their activities were not restricted; cottagers, especially the younger set, would often join the entertainment. Germans, or formal dances, were held each morning at 10:30 at the Blowing

Rock Hotel. Evening dances were held on alternate nights at the Watauga Hotel and the Blowing Rock Hotel, and nightly at the Green Park Hotel. Green Park, a separate town until 1927, provided transportation from Blowing Rock (at 25 cents each) by a wagonette with two lone seats running down the sides.81

The major hotels could offer much more than dancing. The Green Park had two or three bowling alleys on the former 18th hole of the golf course. Other sports included tennis, croquet, fishing, and horseback activities made available by livery stables attached directly to the hotels. Scavenger hunts supplemented recreational riding. A precursor to the horse show took place near the Green Park stables, where riders would try to spear rings with lances at the gallop, or play musical chairs from horseback.82



Mountain flower garden

On the more refined side, cultural programs were offered by groups of guests. A session presented by the Blowing Rock Hotel in August, 1889, demonstrates the talents used by the visitors to amuse themselves:

Programme:

Piano Recital — Miss Rumple Song — Mrs. McKinnon Mr. R. Bingham Recitation Song Miss Stowe Piano Prof. McLean Chorus with flute obligato Miss Waddell Miss Harper Miss Stowe Mr. Harper

Reading from Uncle Remus Mr. Turner Battle Song with Guitar Miss Woodward Piano Miss Gwinn Song Miss Stowe

Piano Mrs. Harper Song Miss Woodward Miss Waddell Song Quartette from Village Clementine83

With such a selection of entertainment to choose from, it is little wonder that a visitor could wax as rhapsodic as Marie Jean O'Neal did in 1893. She called it: "Blowing Rock, the ideal resort for the gay pleasure seekers. Here, Terpsichore holds high carnival nightly, and those who like to indulge in tripping the light fantastic toe may do so, to the soft low strains of 'Home Sweet Home.' Or those of more frolicsome nature, can play tennis or croquet on the lawns of velvety tufted grass, or those of maturer age can roll ten-pins or take a quiet game of whist in the numerous and airy parlors of the commodious Green Park hotel, or the Skyland house. Ye seekers of pleasure oppressed by the heat, come to this region, 'tis a pleasant retreat. Ye ones who are feeble, why linger and die? Come up to this beautiful Land of the Sky."84

A delightfully informative letter from another visitor, a Ms. R.G.H. in 1896, points out the only flaw from the female tourist's point of view: not enough men. She discovered, on her visit to the Green Park Hotel, "One of the most striking characteristics of the place is the vast array of femininity here. There are tall women and short women, women with figures, and women with just plain letters. By the latter I mean women who somewhat resemble the letter 'I', supposing the ornaments of each end to represent the head and the feet respectively. Then there are women who walk around with a big assortment of magazine literature under their arms, where most of it stays. In addition to the styles mentioned, there are some comely creatures with fresh complexions. As yet I have met only one member of the sex who suggested the new women to my mind. I did not intend to overlook her, though I would not have been out of fashion by doing so. It is said that there are a few coquettes here. I cannot speak authoritatively on that point. Indeed, I scarcely think that this report can be genuine. Flirtatious women would not long be satisfied in a quiet place."

And the men? "The men are sadly in the minority here," she reports, "and there are none after the white flannel suit order. Most of them can dance, 'tis true, but they are great in walking, much to the approval of the livery horses."

Despite this disadvantage, there was plenty of fun to be had. "One gentleman expects to give a tutti-fruitti feast next week, and there is a croquet contest on foot for Friday. In addition to these it has been rumored that a man from the valley is contemplating inviting a number of the guests for a straw-ride. This will establish a congeniality among some thirty people. Somehow persons get very close together on a straw-ride. Indeed, people learn to know each other quite well up here. Ball-room etiquette is not popular. Often acquaintances get caught together in a thunderstorm, and have to borrow little articles of wearing apparel: some have left at home their collar-buttons, and a charitable person next door volunteers the temporary use of one of his; a waiter upsets a dinner-tray, and one-half the gravy goes into a fellow's coat pocket, while the rest spreads about at random upon the nice balloon sleeves of the lady sitting to his right; two new acquaintances are out driving, but the horse gets obstreperous, and smashes up the buggy, leaving the bill to be divided — all these experiences draw people closer together, establish common interests, and before they leave for the summer they know each other well enough to borrow one another's evening suits or shirtwaists."

Finally, "A word about the advantages. We are 4300 feet above the sea level, according to neat little circulars distributed here and there. The mercury never grows ambitious, but remains content down about the religious notch. People sleep up here. You don't have to take morphine, chloroform, or any of the artificial means of making one snore. The water out of the spring is thirty-eight degrees temperature, and there are religious services in the drawing room every Sunday evening. For the song service the Moody and Sanky gospel hymn book has been adopted. All tourists are requested to bring their copies and join in the refrain."

The year-round residents of Blowing Rock had neither the money nor the time for a social life approaching that of the summer people. The men were traditionally farmers and raisers of livestock. Projects like the development of the Cone Estate and the building of the Yonahlossee Trail provided welcome cash to supplement their income. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth also saw a dramatic expansion in the lumber industry. It was an unusual mountain family that did not have some members working part time for the Whiting or Grandin Lumber Companies. The end of the twentieth also saw a dramatic expansion in the lumber industry. The was an unusual mountain family that did not have some members working part time for the Whiting or Grandin Lumber Companies.

Census figures document both the harsh life of the mountain farmer and the changes generated by the sudden growth of Blowing Rock. In 1880, the Blowing Rock Township reported 62 family living groups and a total population of 340. The 62 households show a remarkable uniformity in head-of-household occupation. Three women kept house; another was a seamstress. The men included one miller, one carpenter, two merchant/farmers, nine general laborers, ten farm laborers, and thirty-five farmers. Not all reported groups were blood kin, but even so the average household size was between five and six people. High infant death rates keep this figure from being even higher. The Township mortality records for 1880 show twelve deaths for the year. Of these, ten were no older than two years of age. The causes behind these figures were cholera, croup, scarlet fever, and the two incurables, "dead born" and "unknown." Six of the twelve had no attending physician. For the other six, it was Dr. W.B. Councill — the Boone doctor, eight miles away by unimproved road.

Weekly square dances gave some relief to the work and daily hardships. All ages attended, and joined in with the music of banjo, guitar, slap bass, and fiddle provided by local musicians. Drinking could be done relatively cheaply when it was home-brewed and tax-free. Hayrides with five or six wagons full of young local people was also a popular week-end pastime.⁸⁸

The 1890 census was destroyed by fire, but the 1900 census revealed some interesting changes in the town. The black population had gone from five to twenty-nine. These were local, primarily tourist-related seasonal workers. Twelve of the twenty-nine, for example, were cooks. But blacks were also listed as farmers, and three of them — John Henry Hall, George Long, and Charley Pope — were also registered to vote in the 1890s. A sizeable summer servant group increased the black population seasonally, giving Blowing Rock a distinctive black community. Servants'



days off became standardized as Thursday and Sunday afternoons and evenings, and those days became the focus of black social life, and of white dining-out.

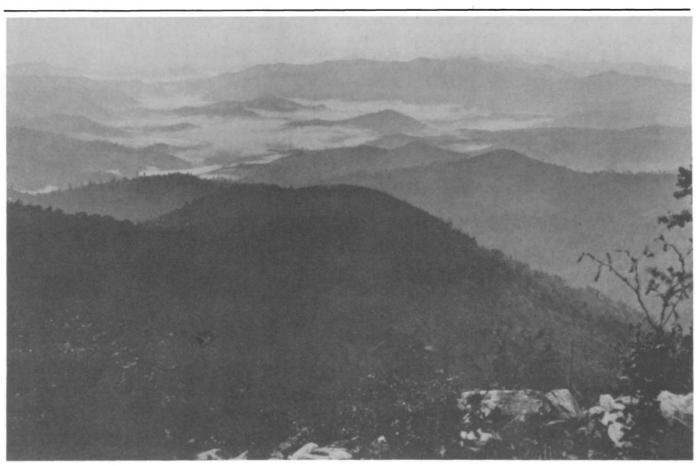
The centennial census reveals Blowing Rock's growth in both size and opportunity. There were now 166 households, with a total population of 805. The average size was inflated by the increased number of boarders who were listed with the homes in which they stayed. Of the 166, 101 heads of households still considered themselves farmers or farm laborers, but there was variety beyond that. Blowing Rock had a shoemaker, several blacksmiths and carpenters, a photographer, a sawyer, teamsters, druggists, a "jewelry man," a butcher, a silver plater, and several clerks. Diverse

opportunities for individual advancement were springing up on every corner. Blowing Rock's native families could not match the incomes of summer residents, but their economy was making giant strides.

Within a fifty-year span, Blowing Rock had blossomed from grazing territory for summer cattle to a seasonal resort shared by thousands. The new century presented the Village with the challenge of preserving the beauty and values of her past, while promoting the growth of a tourist-oriented future. Mayor Joe Clarke warned, "Far be the day when the settlement of Blowing Rock may be seized with a determination to 'citify' the place, to a profanation of the sanctity of primeval conditions."⁸⁹ The challenge would demand the energy and attention of every Blowing Rock citizen.



The early village with Cone Manor in background



"Arrived on the top at last, we saw hundreds of mountain peaks all around us, presenting a spectacle like ocean waves in a storm."



NOTES

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- 7. Information on the Reuben Coffey family may be found in the Lenoir Public Library file of Nancy Alexander's writings: "Gunsmith Had Important Role in Community When Wild Game Abounded Throughout Area."

 James Parks Sr.'s letter is courtesy of Steve Sudderth.
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- 25. Arthur, A History of Watauga County. p.500.
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Carrie Miller Buxton	July 16, 1987
Leonard Ratchford	July 15, 1987
Gwyn Harper	July 2 and 29, 1987
John Christian Bernhardt	July 1, 1987

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- 60. Watauga Democrat. December 2, 1897.

LAND OF THE BREEZE AND HOME OF THE BRAVE / Page 25

- 59. Watauga Democrat. November 11, 1897.
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- 62. Watauga Democrat. March 24, 1892.
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- 71. Interview with Carrie Buxton and Lena Robbins July 16, 1987.
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CHAPTER II

Starting a New Century

Progress could be summed up in two words by the village fathers at the turn-of-the-century: good roads. Blowing Rock had made the commitment to be a tourist town. Now community leaders had to make sure that tourists could reach the Village.

Unfortunately, many early town records were destroyed by a fire in the 50s, so there are gaps in our knowledge of who served in leadership capacities during the first twenty years. However minutes of Commissioners' meetings exist from 1913 which help provide a profile of early political events.

Newspaper accounts indicate that Joe Clarke was mayor in 1889, 1890, 1892, 1894, 1900, 1903, and 1910. Tradition has it that he was the town's first and only mayor until his death in 1910; while this is not true, he is the most likely candidate to have held office during the uncertain years of 1895-98, 1902, and 1904-1909. Clarke was also Secretary-Treasurer of the Caldwell & Watauga Turnpike Company in 1901,¹ and was constantly active in attempts to have a railroad run from Lenoir to Blowing Rock.

H.C. Martin was mayor in 1891, and prominent in Village development for forty years thereafter.² After operating a general store for several years, he sold the store to H.P. Holshouser in 1895 and moved back to Lenoir.³ His interest in Blowing Rock continued, however, due to the fact that he and his family owned the Martin House and since he was elected President of the Caldwell & Watauga Turnpike Company in 1896 and 1898.⁴ In the early 1900s Martin owned and edited the *Lenoir News-Topic*. In 1915, however, Martin returned to Blowing Rock, where he was a charter member of the Chamber of Commerce and its president in 1927.⁵

H.W. Weedon did not let his failed attempt at unincorporating Blowing Rock deter him from staying active in the town's affairs. As the record shows, he was a local Justice of the Peace for eight years, and was mayor in both 1893 and 1899.6 Furthermore, as the owner of the Grand View Hotel, he was a prominent businessman and promoter of tourism.

Dr. C.J. Parlier did not move to Boone until 1895⁷ and to Blowing Rock until 1899,⁸ but he was so highly respected that he was elected mayor in 1901.⁹ He was on the Board of Directors of the Caldwell and Watauga Turnpike in 1903 and 1904,¹⁰ and helped found the Bank of Blowing Rock in 1907. He, as President, Joe Clarke as Vice-President, and future mayor G.M. Sudderth as cashier formed an impressive team of officers for the bank's first years of operation.¹¹

These men headed the push for better transportation routes, but they were not alone. L.P. and C.V. Henkel received a state charter to incorporate the Blowing Rock Line in 1899, to carry freight and passengers to Lenoir, Linville, Cranberry, and Elk Park.¹² On one excursion in 1901, three of their horses were struck by lightning and killed near the Green Park Hotel while pulling a surrey. Fortunately the driver escaped unhurt.¹³ A greater threat to the livery business road monopoly than lightning was the impending improvement of the Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike to open it to regular automobile traffic.

The original turnpike was a graded dirt road, suitable for



Sallie, George M. and Bettie Sudderth

produce wagons, herders, and lumber hauling. Wagons and surreys would often mire in mud hub-deep.¹⁴ With such a rough trip, tourists were encouraged to make extended visits before attempting to return home.

The macadamizing of the road in 1910 changed that situation. This method began with layers of progressively finer crushed rock used for the road bed. A portable crusher, operating on a 25-horsepower gasoline engine, produced as many as one hundred loads of rock each day. A large road roller would then level the rock, followed by a coat of oil base liquid which allowed the subsequent upper layers to adhere to the roadbed. Some stretches required dynamite blasting to keep the rise at a four percent grade. Among the casualties was the lovely Bridal Veil Falls, a scenic resting place for weary travellers. With a day-long trip now transformed into an afternoon's jaunt, rest stops had become expendable.

Along Came the Auto

The first automobile sputtered into Blowing Rock on September 20, 1908 with Osmond Barringer of Charlotte at the wheel. Carrie Miller Buxton, a long-time resident of Blowing Rock, says that as the auto became visible to folks at Holshouser's General Store, Aunt Jane Holshouser exclaimed, "Come here quick, there's somethin' comin' up the road with nothin' pushin' of it and nothin' pullin' of it!"

Barringer made the trip from Lenoir in under two hours without incident, spending the night in the Village with Tom Coffey at the Watauga Inn. He reported his only difficulty the next morning, when he discovered that "most of the rubber tread had been pulled off one of our tires in making the steep climb, and as it was impossible to get another in less than three days, we started in to fix the one we had." After securing half of a first-class cowhide he cut rows of holes in same, pulled the strings through and tied the knots, the result being a job that held nearly all the way home.¹⁷

The second auto trip occurred several months later and was much more adventuresome. Four Hickory men made the drive, to be greeted with waves and calls of "Hello, Mr. Barringer!" Wade Shuford, the driver, recalled that no license plates were yet issued, "but since the Reo was the 470th car operating in North Carolina...we took house numbers 4-7-0 and tacked them in the strip of leather which we attached to the car." Blowing Rock was easily gained, but on driving further to Linville they met a gypsy wagon on a narrow stretch of road and were forced at gunpoint to back a half-mile to a turn-off, so the frightened horses could pass. 18

With the resurfacing of the turnpike in 1910, cars streamed to the mountains. James Robinson, a Durham visitor, reported in 1913, "The automobile is the developer of the Blowing Rock country and is demonstrating this fact daily. This season has witnessed...in a single month more machines than have come up during the whole past history of the place. Four hundred and ten came up during July." Day trips and weekend visits became commonplace, and would irrevocably change the nature of tourism and the sleepy Village.

The automobile did more than offer quick pleasure trips to tourists. It helped shape the way communities defined themselves. That was certainly the case with Blowing Rock and Boone. The Boone-Blowing Rock Turnpike, graded in 1891 by Cpt. T.J. Coffey, had always taken a back seat to the Lenoir road.²⁰. John Preston Arthur, commenting on this fact, said that Boone's population "is a pretty constant quantity, as there are but few visitors to the town



The old and new means of locomotion

in the summer season, almost all stopping at Blowing Rock and seemingly unconscious of the fact that Boone is on the map at all."²²

In 1910, the Auto Transfer Company of Boone, proud possessors of a fleet of two cars, started operating between Boone and Blowing Rock.²² The following year saw the announcement of a new record for the North Wilkesboro-Blowing Rock trip; only seven hours!²³ Winter mail delivery from Lenoir to her northern neighbors began by car in 1916. One Village resident commented gratefully, "to get the mail at 5 o'clock is a luxury we winter residents are not accustomed to."²⁴ Not long thereafter, such additional luxuries as daily bus service to Johnson City (July, 1927)²⁵ and

the use of a school bus to take children to the Blowing Rock consolidated school (October 24, 1927) were implemented. Before that date, children were hauled to school in an open truck.²⁶

Howard P. Holshouser bought the first Village motor vehicle in April, 1913, a truck which he used for carrying freight and produce from Lenoir.²⁷ G.M. Sudderth is credited with local ownership of the first Blowing Rock auto, a fact mentioned by the Village's *Watauga Democrat* correspondent



Wagoning on the Boone Turnpike

on June 26, 1913. "Our prosperous citizen and progressive mayor," he wrote, "having served his apprenticeship as an expert driver of the 'motor cycle with the wild cat voice' has discarded that plaything and is taking trial trips and joy rides in a small automobile which makes much noise and covers much ground in an extraordinarly short space of time."

The following month, this same writer argued for leniency toward autombile use when, in an emotional communique, he said: "the many automobiles lying round town when not flying around town lend quite an air of up-to-dateness and though the peaceful air of this old time resort has forever gone, yet, with all the grunting and purring and screeching and howling of the many machines, rushing to and fro, and gay parties going far out into the country, returning in the 'wee, small' hours of the night, awakening from sound sleep more than one tired citizen, notwithstanding the drawback connected with the introduction of the 'new-fangled notions,' we citizens of Blowing Rock are glad that the auto has come to stay." One can only ask — Was he sure?

A Full Service Village

Blowing Rock's progressive outlook required more than just good roads. It also required telephones, electricity, a municipal water system, fire and police protection — all the amenities of a modern town.

The exact location of the first telephone in Blowing Rock is not known. Mr. Lawrence Coffey, however, of John's River was given a contract in the spring of 1897 to put up a line between Boone and Blowing Rock. It was in place by the first week of July with the Boone terminus at the Coffey Hotel.²⁹ However, the line never connected with any other towns and was down for repairs as often as it was operational during the five years of its existence.

In 1901, the Globe Telephone Company installed an office at the Holshouser store with extensive connections throughout western North Carolina.³⁰ A long-distance line stayed in operation until the flood of 1916, which washed away all communications between the Village and the outside world.³¹ Long-distance telephone messages could be shouted down Main Street, or carried by hand. As small girls, Ethel Holshouser Burns and Carrie Miller Buxton used to earn the right to split a chocolate drop for relaying messages to guests at the Green Park Hotel.³²

After the flood, Blowing Rock stayed without long-distance service until Southern Bell came to town in 1926.³³ Telephone poles on Main Street were authorized by the town council in January, but long-distance connections were not completed until July of the next year. Ed's Cafe was used as the "central" until the main office on Sunset Drive could be completed.³⁴ The exchange opened on July 19, 1927, with Mr. Harry Cooper at the switchboard. The next full day of service saw the handling of 43 long-distance calls from the Village's thirteen telephones.³⁵ One of these, at the fire station, provided Blowing Rock's only fire alarm system.³⁶

Electricity appeared soon after the telephone and gradually replaced the kerosene lamp in most homes. Wealthier families — the Cones, the Daingerfields, the Stringfellows — could afford acetylene gas.³⁷ On August 1, 1912 Thomas H. Coffey, owner of the Watauga Inn, used a stream behind his property to provide energy to light the hotel and grounds.³⁸ Three years later, H.C. Hayes became the first merchant to light his store by electricity, using an eighthorsepower gasoline engine weighing 3,490 pounds.³⁹ Hayes also earned newspaper recognition when he diverted stream water to his house, providing his family with both hot and cold running water.⁴⁰

Large scale production of water-generated electricity did not arrive until W.L. Alexander began the Mayview development. In 1919, he contracted to provide power to the town, and in 1921 his contract was extended to thirty years.⁴¹ When Alexander died unexpectedly in 1925, the Mayview water works was purchased by the town. The financing for the purchase was included in the largest bond issue ever passed to that point in the town's history, a

\$100,000 water and sewer issue in 1926.⁴² The system required seven miles of water pipe and twelve thousand feet of sewer pipe. Included in the system were Mayview Park and Green Park — both of which were annexed in November of 1926.⁴³

The Village Gets A Face Lift

Blowing Rock may have taken care problems, but the early 1900s brought taken place so quickly that the charming becoming a dirty little town. Hog pens elegant cottages on Main Street, cattle and hordes of flies drew attention to the clean sections of streets turned into mud

Dr. J.E. Brooks, along with Mayors the initiative to clean up the Village. In condemnation proceedings against the



of its utility needs without major other pressing troubles. Growth had mountain village was on its way to and wooden shacks mingled with and horses fragrantly marked their trails, lack of a Village sewer system. Even the pits during rains or thaws.⁴⁴

Sudderth, Robbins, and Coffey, took 1912, Mayor Sudderth began worst buildings on Main Street. The

town would reimburse their owners, but the eyesores had to go. A building code was enacted requiring a license for any construction within thirty feet of any public street.⁴⁵

Sudderth resigned the mayorship in October, 1913, in order to supervise work on the new Blowing Rock Bank. Ed Robbins was appointed to succeed him and quickly attacked the sanitation problem. In February, 1914, a new ordinance required all persons within the town to construct a sanitary privy so as to exclude all flies. In March, Marshal Foster became the town's first public works employee. His responsibilities included collecting garbage and sewage weekly for twelve-and-a-half cents per house, and twenty cents for hotels and boarding houses. Robbins, Brooks, and Sudderth formed the Privy Inspection Committee, and soon discovered the need to amend the ordinance to include the stipulation that each privy contain pail or pails which can readily be taken out by garbage man.

With cleanliness still a major concern, town ordinances were extensively revised in 1917 when D.P. Coffey became mayor. Joining the "privy law" were regulations against tethering cattle so that they could reach the sidewalk, burying dead animals within the town limits without a permit, and maintaining a hog pen "as a nuisance." Not until 1926 were hog pens prohibited within one hundred feet of public streets. 52

Sanitation rules were generally popular, but other improvements were greeted less enthusiastically. In 1915, H.C. Hayes led merchants in building the first "improved" sidewalks. They were constructed of sawdust, which was hailed as superior "to wading in mud shoe mouth deep."⁵³ Efforts to improve street conditions had little success. Mayor Grover Robbins initiated a \$15,000 road work bond in 1919, but was forced to hold a referendum on it when a majority of Village voters petitioned. The bond went down to defeat, and Robbins resigned in frustration.⁵⁴ He would not serve in town government again until 1928.

Outside the Village, transportation routes were becoming a recognized public responsibility. The Boone-Blowing



Boone Street, today's Sunset Drive, after surfacing with crushed stone in the 1930s (C.W. Moody's Furniture Shop on left)

Rock Turnpike came under county control in 1919,⁵⁵ and the Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike was purchased by the State of North Carolina in 1921.⁵⁶ One year later the Yonahlossee Trail was also acquired by the State.⁵⁷ North Carolina finished paving the highway from Hickory to Boone in 1926.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Blowing Rock's streets remained in such poor condition that early in the Spring of 1924, one disgruntled citizen remarked: "I wish the ground hog would come out today and try to cross the street anywhere in Blowing Rock, then we would be even with him for all the bad weather we have seen since he saw his shadow, for he would sink down in the mud to rise no more."⁵⁹

The "quaintness" of unpaved streets was attractive to

many tourists, however, as reflected in these comments in 1919 by a Charlotte visitor: "Maybe the infection (of progress) will someday reach Blowing Rock, the more widely known neighbor of the county seat, and Colonel Tom Coffey be relieved of the job of lighting the lone street lamp that hangs from a structure about the middle of town. But the day we know is far distant when Blowing Rock will make 'boast' of paved streets, for then a glory of the town would have disappeared. One pleasant occupation always provided for the visitors is the flopping down on some wayside bench or chair and shaking the sand from the shoe. What would life amount to in Blowing Rock if that entertaining diversion should be withdrawn from the people? Why, lots of folks would get mad, say it is not the same old Blowing Rock at all, and swear never to go back there again."

No one ever said it would be easy to be a tourist town.

Fire!

"Blowing Rock Village is unattractive, and one could well wish that its main street, or ragged shacks mainly, could be swept away." Fred Olds wrote this on a visit from Lenoir in September, 1923.⁶¹ His wish would soon be blazingly granted.

On the night of October 3, 1923, a fire broke out in the Company Store of John Lentz on the east side of downtown Main Street. Beginning north of the Reeves House, it consumed the Martin Drug Store, Hayes General Store, the photo shop, the old post office, the Episcopal Chapel and Reading Room, and various smaller stores, dying out just before its flames could engulf the Holshouser General Store on Main Street.⁶²

The late Lena Robbins, Grover's wife, expressed ambivalence toward the fire. "It was a terrible thing to happen, but it was also a blessing in disguise. The town needed some new buildings because most all the old ones were run down, and after the fire many new buildings and stores made up Main Street. These might not have been built had it not been for the fire."63

Despite the widespread destruction, Blowing Rock bounced back into action. A new ordinance banning wood construction was immediately issued and H.C. Hayes started immediately on a new brick store. By the next spring, six hundred construction workers were reported in the Village as the town went on a reconstructive building boom.⁶⁵

As for road improvement, Main Street still wasn't paved, but it was graded and widened in late 1924. This was a traumatic decision which divided the town. Especially strong opposition to street widening was expressed by the town's women.⁶⁶ William Morris, the first boarding house operator, had laid out Blowing Rock's streets in the 1870s

and had planted a row of beautiful maple trees along either side of Main Street.⁶⁷ After fifty years of providing shade and beauty, these trees would now be sacrificed to meet the needs of the automobiling public.

The disastrous fire of 1923 had also highlighted the need for a fire department in Blowing Rock. Citizens responded in 1926 with a community-wide drive to buy a modern \$6500 fire engine. The Community Club donated \$300 from horse show profits and Myra Mebane sponsored one of her gala dances at Mayview which raised \$1,000. Other private donors contributed enough to come up with the additional \$5,000. The engine was finally ordered in September and arrived



Maple trees along Main Street

in December — but it was too late to save the old Watauga Inn, which fell victim to fire on October 29th. After this latest disaster, the Volunteer Fire Department had no shortage of applicants. Fire chief J.A. Panella chose Paul Klutz, Robert Greene, and Robert Pringle to serve as his drivers. He had a thirty-eight man roster on the first day of the Department's existence!⁶⁹

Hired To Serve For Better Or Worse

Town government consisted of a mayor and three aldermen, a ratio which would stay the same until 1975. A garbage collector was hired in 1914. Robert Greene was appointed manager of the new water and sewer system in 1926,70 and H.P. Holshouser was hired as treasurer and tax collector in 1929.71 Other than those few positions, town authority during Blowing Rock's first forty years rested with the town marshal and his deputies.

The marshal had to be a jack of all trades, with responsibilities far beyond keeping order. He was also the town's tax collector; in 1914, his salary was \$26 a month and five percent of all taxes collected.⁷² The base salary was raised periodically, but a tax commission stayed in effect until 1929. The marshal had the power to remit some fines and delay collection on taxes, but by doing so he was taking money out of his own pocket. He was also responsible for maintaining town roads. All male citizens were required to work on the public roads four days a year according to the 1917 ordinances (down from ten days in 1896) or pay a fee to avoid labor. Men found guilty of misdemeanors in mayor's court could also be required to do road work in lieu of a fine. When D.W. Wooten became marshal in 1923, he received from the mayor not handcuffs and weapons, but "1 wheelbarrow, 6 shovels, 4 mattocks, 1 rock hammer, 1 rake, and 1 stop watch."⁷³



Pinky Baldwin and wife Jane at their primitive cabin. (Also pictured are Ellen and Suzanne Coffey and George and Blaine Sudderth.)

Police officers were thus put in the position of pressuring their unwilling neighbors for tax money in order to receive their own paychecks, and of "forcing into involuntary servitude" the people with whom they had to live. Some years marshals were only hired for the summer months and it was common for marshals to quit after only a month or two on the job.⁷⁴

Inexperience and bad judgment can be a hindrance in some professions. For a police officer, it can be fatal. In 1909, Policeman Willett Miller stopped William Baldwin, the older brother of local character Pinky Baldwin. Miller's supporters claimed that Baldwin was a bootlegger; Baldwin argued that Miller was harassing him over a private grudge. The two men quarrelled and struggled, and Baldwin shot Miller dead. He was tried and convicted of murder and sentenced to death by

electrocution. An appeal in 1910 won him a retrial which resulted in a reduced sentence of five years for manslaughter. Baldwin was convinced that he had acted in self-defense and risked resentencing to appeal for a third trial. The North Carolina Supreme Court allowed his case to be heard again and William Baldwin was found innocent.⁷⁵

The prohibition issue, regardless of its relevance to the Baldwin case, would prove to be a continuing aggravation for town peace officers. Prohibition pitted local marshals against local manufacturers and distributors, while wealthy summer consumers could stay above the fray. In 1926, Frank A. Linney, the United States District Attorney in Boone, reported that "Most of the liquor drinking in western North Carolina, in my opinion, is done by the higher grades of society and the smart young people." This fits in well with the memories of Wataugans like Wade Brown, who grew up during Prohibition. Shipments were intercepted, stills broken up, and arrests made, but the traffic had too much social and financial support to be stopped completely.

The Lumbering Legacy

While tourism has been the dominant force in shaping our community, it was strongly rivalled by the lumber industry during the town's first half-century. The magnificent Appalachian forest nurtured her people with homes, fuel, jobs, and panoramic beauty. The first farmers cleared their lands of trees and then burned thousands of board feet of high quality lumber for lack of a better method of disposal. The Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike provided an outlet for selected trees, individually picked by lumber companies. Hemlocks and spruce trees each brought a silver dollar. Large poplars might be worth fifty cents. White pine would go for twenty-five to fifty cents a tree. W.H. Weedon got his start in the lumber industry; Torver Robbins, Sr. started his business career working in his uncle's store at the lumber camps of Shulls Mill. Many year-round Blowing Rock citizens cashed in on the thriving lumber industry and supplemented their farm income.

Not long after the turn-of-the-century, the lumber industry giants moved into the Southern Highlands. The Whiting Lumber Company worked what is now Price Park, the Ritter Lumber Company bought much of the Lost Cove area, the Grandin Lumber Company owned a large stretch along the Watauga-Caldwell border, and the Globe and Giant Lumber Companies had property east of Blowing Rock extending towards Wilkesboro.⁸²

Industry-owned narrow gauge railroads crisscrossed the mountain slopes. Their landholdings were vast even by turn-of-the century standards. The registrar of deeds, W.R. Gragg, reported in 1912 that the documentation for Grandin Lumber Company holdings contained 190,000 words and took 23 1/2 days to record!⁸³

The technology could be as impressive as the holdings. The Giant Lumber Company maintained the world's largest flume, an elevated wooden trough which floated lumber nineteen miles downslope to the Southern Railway tracks at North Wilkesboro. It was described in this way in 1909:

A railroad bicycle, carrying one man, runs along the top of the flume. The timber is sawn on portable mills in the forest and the lumber and tan bark are floated down the flume. One plank is tacked behind the other making strings of about 500 feet, following



The Whiting Lumber Company in Shulls Mill

close together. In this way, the capacity of the flume is about 100,000 feet daily. Sometimes the lumber is bundled, a string tied around each end of about 100 feet, and tan bark bundled and laid on top of it. In this way a large amount of lumber and 50,000 pounds of tan bark in a day can be handled, the bark being kept dry. The stream of water turned into the flume easily moves the constant succession of planks and their loads of bark, the nineteen mile run from the top to the bottom taking five or six hours.⁸⁴

J.C. Bernhardt remembers myriad problems with the structure — cracks letting out water, variations in stream flow causing log jams—but the flume stayed in operation until the 1916 flood, after which it was no longer kept in repair.⁸⁵

The lumber industry provided an important economic shot in the arm to Blowing Rock and reduced its dependence on Lenoir. In 1917, goods shipped by rail to Shulls Mill and transported to the Village became cheaper than shipping



Grover Robbins, Sr. (on left) in his uncle's Shulls Mill Store



Sawmill in Shulls Mill Area

through Lenoir and then up the mountain via the Turnpike.⁸⁶ Prominent townsmen invested in the industry, too. A single mill fire in 1925 cost G.M. Sudderth \$3,000 to \$4,000 in machinery and 130,000 board feet of lumber.⁸⁷

For all its advantages, lumbering also brought problems to Blowing Rock. Early pictures of the Village show denuded hills ravaged by lumbering before second growth forests matured. Road maintenance problems were aggravated by heavy lumber vehicles and siltation polluted streams and lakes. More serious, however, was the constant and terrifying danger of forest fires. The forest floor was covered with lap-wood, the scraps left from cutting. The lap-wood was perfect tinder for a blaze. In 1926, the *Watauga Democrat* reported, "The scourge of forest fires is seen all along this (the Yonahlossee) trail. Last year fire burned over much of Grandfather Mountain and the beauty of the forests will be scarred for years to come."

The influx of cash from the lumber industry also threatened social values in a way that shocked the more conservative townspeople. Dr. Alfred Mordecai commented, "The lumberjacks drank and gambled around the campfires. Young blacks bought worn-out Model T automobiles. Women began to wear silk stockings and young girls began to use lipstick."

Frank Proffitt was an avid collector of lumberjack folklore. The following song, entitled "Shulls Mill," was one such remnant of the lumbering era. Proffit noted: "In the early 1920s Whiting Lumber Company cut the timber on Grandfather Mountain. They brought the logs down to a valley called Shulls Mill, where the mill set. Old timber cutters has told me they cut one winter when it snowed and froze every night and day. When it thawed in the spring, the stumps of the trees was ten feet high. Around this job gathered many women who was seeking a easy dollar. They rented a house on a knob — which is to this day known as Whores' Knob."

"Shulls Mill"

I'm long and I'm tall, Lord, I'm skinny and I'm mean. When the women sees me coming, You can hear them scream.

The girls on Beaver Dam, They think they're so fine, But I'll take the women on Whores' Knob Every doggone time.

My old double bit, It's filed good and keen, It's the choppin'est axe That's ever been seen. My axe makes my money, I keep in mighty keen. The girls on Beaver Dam Thinks I'm purty damn mean.

Got to keep the skidway Filled up all the time. Got to keep the train a runnin' Or you can't make a dime.

I hear that log train a-coming, Sounds like it's running away. I hope it don't wreck Till I gets my pay.

Goin' by the commissary, Only way to get my pay. I won't have a nickle When it comes pay day.

The girls at Shulls Mill Got loving on their minds But the girls on Beaver Dam Wants money all the time.

Goin' to leave Monday, Make the big trees fall. Goin' to where I can hear Old Whiting's log train squall.

Away up on Grandpappy Mountain, Makin' the big trees fall. When I gets my pay Hain't gonna work a-tall.

Moves to restrict and control the lumber industry began shortly after 1900. At that time, no national forest existed east of the Mississippi River. The textile magnate Moses H. Cone and local author Shepherd M. Dugger both argued strenuously for the creation of an Appalachian Forest Reserve centered on Grandfather Mountain. In 1907, Cone listed nineteen reasons why the Reserve was needed. They ranged from "The protection of our mountain forest from fire," to "Bring wealthy people here who will spend money and invest among us." County representative Romulus Zacharia Linney warned that such a plan would dispossess the farmer, and "that wild animals would inhabit their school houses and churches and that they would be taken away from their homes and the cemeteries of their fathers and taken into a strange land." Linney's speeches prompted a reply from Dugger, a master of political rhetoric whose open letter could not even bring success to its cause:

For many years the people from the cities have been coming to our county in summer and influencing us by the inimitable charms of their superior advantages. They have mingled with us as social equals; they have been as the sweet jasmines of the South set in bouquets of rhododendron upon the crags and all blending into one beautiful harmony of colors.

Our forested mountains have been the magnetism that has caused them to invest in our lands and double the value of our taxable property.

They have built grand hotels and costly mansions at Blowing Rock, that look like windowed cloudships that had

anchored there that their guests might rest and dance to the music of the spheres. They have constructed artificial lakes with fairy-like fleets and shadowy sails kissed by the silver moon-beams—and all that they might enjoy the beautiful mountains, the sweet air and the crystal waters. Now they have to look upon steep fields of girdled trees and listen to the hum of the dust vomiting saw mill, as it disembowels not only the sacred oak and the lofty pine but even the sapling that should grow for future timber.

Col. Linney, do you know how you are afflicting the minds of these people by your tirade upon the forest reserve? Do they know that they have got you down as being engaged in one of the lowest schemes that ever a man of your talent engaged in on God's earth? Why, if the devil was unchained upon the earth for a thousand years, with his seven heads and ten horns and fumes of sulphur streaming from his nostrils like the trails of blazing comets, with all this malice and guile, he could not perpetuate so damnable an outrage upon the mountain people as that of prejudicing them against preserving the glory of their country for the pleasure of future generations.⁹⁴

Attempts to make the Grandfather Mountain area a national park did not stop with the failure of the Appalachian Forest Reserve. In 1917, the MacRaes offered to donate the top of Grandfather, which was then barren of trees—as part of a western North Carolina reserve.⁹⁵ Ultimately, the offer was rejected, but the recently created National Park Service did send representatives to Blowing Rock in 1924 to evaluate the offer.⁹⁶ The Park Service had come at the request of delegates from North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and Tennessee who had met at Mayview Manor earlier that summer, and who had unanimously agreed on a Grandfather-Linville location for a Southern Appalachian National Park.⁹⁷

The Blue Ridge in Virginia and the Great Smoky Mountains on the Tennessee-North Carolina border were selected as national parks before Grandfather, but the federal government maintained a presence by establishing a Civilian Conservation Corps Reforestation Camp near Globe in 1933. The purpose of the camp was to repair damage from over-cutting, fire, and the chestnut blight.⁹⁸

Before the blight struck in the late 1920s, nearly one tree in four around Blowing Rock was a chestnut. This ratio was most noticeable in the Fall when the brilliant yellow leaves brightened the mountainsides. Children collected the nuts for eating and for play and the mountainsides were covered with mast which was used to fatten hogs. Chestnut wood was a popular fuel that warmed the home with a friendly crackle and pop as it burned. The wood was also a staple of the construction industry, with the bark used for roofs and siding. Today, wormy chestnut is a precious wood. In the early part of the century it was used as scrap, with value given only to clear chestnut. The bark was a main supplier of tannic acid to tanneries throughout the South. The blight was a major blow to the lumber industry and mountain residents alike.⁹⁹

Forests in the Blowing Rock area were in such a devastated condition that Rufus Gwyn of Lenoir started a Committee to Save Grandfather, urging government intervention. The Linville Improvement Company had owned the mountain since the 1880s, but their efforts in the 1920s and 30s to donate it to the state as a park had been rejected. The company was rebuffed by both federal and state government, who argued that selling timber rights was necessary to pay land taxes. Owner's committee called attention to the dilemma, but could not solve it. Only after World War II, when Hugh MacRae's visionary grandson Hugh Morton received Grandfather Mountain as his share of the dissolution of the Linville Improvement Corporation, were successful steps taken to restore the mountain's natural beauty. Morton worked tirelessly to protect new forest growth and to develop the mountain into a tourist attraction and nature preserve. Blowing Rock citizens and tourists alike could now safely enjoy the natural beauty of the mountains for generations to come.

"United We Stand"

Sociologists suggest that a characteristic of Appalachian communities is the refusal of residents to join social organizations. Yet, in the middle of winter, January 1913, Blowing Rock proudly made the following declaration:

The town is awake to its responsibilities as follows: Tuesday afternoon regularly a Bible Reading meets at 3 o'clock in some home, that night the Men's club in the Randall Memorial; Wednesday night a prayer service is held in the Reading Room; the Debating Society at the same place Thursday night, and on Friday afternoon the Mothers' Prayer Meeting meets at the homes of its members; while twice a week the Masonic and Odd Fellows' lodges

meet, the one on Fridays and the other on Saturdays, and each Sunday in the month one of the four churches in our village is open for services and preaching, while every Sunday a school composed of all denominations, six in all, meets in the Baptist church.¹⁰³

Quite a busy schedule for a people who like to stick to themselves!

Most organizations in the early part of the century were strictly segregated by sex. The Masonic Lodge was the chief gathering place for the men of the town. Masonry provided the benefits of private male camaraderie, and a chance for spiritual and philosophic reflection away from the societal confines of an organized church. Mayor Joe Clarke was Worshipful Master of Watauga Lodge 273 in 1899, the highest office in the lodge. Village participation soon grew enough to justify its own branch, Blowing Rock Lodge 458 AF & AM, with members from many prominent families. When Clarke died in 1910, he was given a Masonic funeral in Lenoir and his obituary was written by brothers T.H. Coffey and G.M. Sudderth, 105 who would head the lodge in 1916.106 Episcopalian minister William Savage was not a Mason himself but he frequently attended meetings. He leaves us a fond recollection of "Uncle Joe" at his Masonic post: "He attended Lodge regularly, no matter what the weather might be, in storm of rain or snow, whether cold or warm, if one would climb the steps of the Lodge Room he would find 'dear Uncle Joe' as he is yet affectionately spoken of sitting by the stove, pipe in mouth, clouds of smoke issuing from beneath the broad-brimmed hat, a welcoming smile lighting up the rounded face, while a hearty grip sealed the welcome to the late comer who was needed, perhaps, to complete the mystic number required for a communication." 107 Local Masons were active participants in county benefits for the state's first orphanage at Oxford. They also received lecturers and visitors from state affiliates. The Lodge exercised its influence on the Village not as an organization per se, but through the active involvement of its members. 108

For those less interested in the formalities of Masonry, a Men's Social Club was founded by Reverend Savage. They met during the Winter of 1913 at the Randall Memorial Building on Main Street. There they would enjoy "a couple of hours of companionship before the biggest open fireplace in Blowing Rock, eating apples and swapping yarns, guessing riddles and 'smoking the weed.' "109

More serious discussions were conducted by the Debating Society, where national political questions were formally discussed either among the men of the town or against teams from Foscoe or Boone. Topics ranged from the benefits of a railroad for Blowing Rock to who had been treated worse by the government, the black man or Indian. No topic was too hot to handle, including the question of female suffrage. The suffrage discussion pointed out the traditional separation of gender roles in 1913, and the results of the debate were that "out of courtesy to our Blowing Rock women, than whom there are none more fair anywhere, the judges decided in favor of the affirmative, though not one of the fair sex of our town approved of woman suffrage. Three cheers for the ladies!"¹¹¹

The novelty of women asserting their opinions in mixed-sex public gatherings was demonstrated the next year when a lady evangelist visited town. She gave a public talk with "quite a crowd gathering to hear her, as it is a rare occurrence [sic] for a woman to speak in these parts. A man who would not attend a prayer meeting or a Bible reading will go out to hear a woman speak any time." 112

The Fair Sex Convene

Social conventions never limited Blowing Rock's women from joining together for entertainment or service to the public. The Community Club was one of the first, and certainly the most prominent, such group for women. It's origins extend back to the days of Mary Nelson Carter's "Lend-A-Hand Library." The library was moved in October, 1913, from its first home in a small cottage on her lawn to the Mission House Reading Room on Main Street. Mrs. Carter worked with Reverend Savage in raising several hundred dollars for the construction of the building. She was particularly interested in morally uplifting the mountaineer: her obituary stated that "it was her vision to see gathered there the boys and men of the village in their leisure hours enjoying and profiting by healthful and helpful literature, thus robbing the evil one of those who might fall before the temptations of the street."

The Mary Nelson Carter Memorial Library fell into disuse after Reverend Savage was reassigned to Virginia Beach in 1916. Fortunately, Alice Wood collected a number of the books from the floor of the Mission House in 1918, preventing their destruction in the 1923 fire. These few books, augmented by small private donations, were all that

remained of the original Lend-A-Hand until 1928. The Community Club had coalesced in 1923 and was formed by women who had been involved in social and civic improvement work.¹¹⁷ An anonymous benefactor donated about six hundred volumes to the library in September,¹¹⁸ and the Community Club helped finance the purchase of a thousand more when the Boone Fork Institute closed in January.¹¹⁹ The women agreed to share their bounty with the school, and November 13, 1928 saw the grand opening of the Blowing Rock Community and School Library.¹²⁰ In addition to the books, the club donated five magazine subscriptions to keep school children abreast of current events: *Good Housekeeping, American, Child Life, Popular Mechanics,* and *Readers' Digest.*¹²¹ The connection with the school would last until 1936, when the collections were split and the school and public libraries became separate entities.

The Community Club did much more than provide a library for the town. The women raised money to wire the school house for electric lights and to buy desks, window shades, and a piano for the children. Pupils were provided with clothing, shoes, and hot lunches, and medically needy townspeople who could not afford hospital care were given operations and medication at Club expense. The Community Club was also involved in organizing the Blowing Rock Horse Show and providing services to its guests. During the rugged post-War and Depression years of the 1930s, no other organization did as much to aid the town.

The Community Club had its social side, too, and here they united with other women's groups. For the Club, those difficult winter months were the busiest time of year when club meetings and events melted the dark and frozen days with heated activity. A look at the programs of two of these groups, both deemed worthy of front page status in the *Watauga Democrat*, provides a look at social events before the days of television.

The Katty Klub met with Miss Dorothy Hayes (on December 4, 1925) at her home on Main Street. The living room was very attractive with bowls of narcissus and yellow and white chrysanthemums. Cards were played and several piano solos were given by Miss Lillian Johnson, Annie Lee Crisp, and Dorothy Hayes.

Miss Helen Coffey was cordially received as a new member of the club. Delightful refreshments were served consisting of Jello with whipped cream, fruit cake, and cocoa. A most enjoyable evening was spent.¹²³

The Tuesday Evening Club, at its meeting this week (February 21, 1928) with Miss Ethel Holshouser, carried out a program honoring both Lincoln and Washington. The program was opened by the singing of 'America the Beautiful.' Miss Mabel Coffey then read the Scripture lesson and led in prayer. This was followed by the reading of the Gettysburg Address by Miss Louise Icenhour; 'To Washington' by Mrs. Stuart Cannon; 'Sketch of the Life of Washington' Miss Annie Greene; 'Sketch of the Life of Lincoln' Mrs. Robert Greene; 'Anecdotes Pertaining to Lincoln' Mrs. I.E. Story; 'Story of Washington' Miss Ethel Holshouser; 'Lincoln's Favorite Poem' Miss Pearle Webb. Refreshments were served by Mrs. W.L. Holshouser, mother of the hostess, assisted by Miss Holshouser and Miss Mary Louise Williams.¹²⁴

Such were the meetings held in our little mountain community when the edifying influences of cottagers and tourists were not present!

Summer residents did play a major role in linking the young people of the town with national youth organizations. Elsie Boogher was first president of the Community Club and her sister Ethel first secretary-treasurer, but the sisters from St. Louis had begun their activities earlier than 1923.¹²⁵ They, with the aid of Mrs. Susie Stringfellow, founded the first branch of the Camp Fire Girls in North Carolina at Blowing Rock in 1915, the Sowangataka Camp.¹²⁶ Mrs. Stringfellow is often credited with beginning the local Boy Scouts in 1914 as well.¹²⁷ A Tribe of Lone Scouts, a national group founded in 1915 and patterned on the Boy Scouts, was begun locally in 1916 by boys living on the Cone Estate. The group was under the direction of Paul Greene.¹²⁸ These were but a few of the efforts made by Blowing Rock's seasonal residents to integrate local children into what was seen as the mainstream of American life.

Not all diversions were to be found within the confines of a club, of course. Entertainment abounded in the Village. Box suppers and square dances were frequent, either as benefits for school or church, or just for their own sake. Gypsies, who visited every spring until the 1930s, were looked upon with awe by children and suspicion by adults. Lena Robbins remembered caravans of three or four families camped at Mrs. Teague's property where the Boxwood Motel is today. Always dressed in rainbow colors, the adults would sing and dance while the youngsters peered from the shadows. Each clan would stay about a weeek, doing odd jobs, occasionally stealing chickens and milk

cows, and then move on.129

Infrequently, outside entertainment would find its way to the mountains. Circuses would visit Boone every couple of years. Before the days of movie theaters, travelling projectionists would set up moving pictures in the neighborhood store. Such pastimes would draw aggrieved reactions from local ministers:

The show given a while ago (July 1913) by so-called 'Mexican Joe' was well patronized by some of our citizens, who, without the ghost of a protest, paid a big price for admission, listening patiently to the jokes and gazing at the dizzy moving pictures for three hours, the meanwhile sitting upon hard boards without backs, their feet either dangling in mid air or touching the cold ground, when for the same price an entertainment was advertised to be given the next night or two in a comfortable building, where, seated upon benches with backs, they could have been entertained with literary gems sparkling with wit or dewy with pathos, but though Professor Henry V. Maxwell of Butler, Tennessee, according to contract, was on hand at the time and place advertised and waited until 9:30 o'clock, not a soul went out to hear him, though he kindly offered to divide profits with an object of common interest, the Union Sunday School in this town!¹³⁰

It appears that in Blowing Rock, as elsewhere, sometimes people just don't seem to know what's good for them. Nothing could be more American than the Fourth of July, brass bands, and baseball, and Blowing Rock enjoyed them to the hilt. The Fourth was always a special holiday, exploding at the height of the tourist season. In 1912, festivities were advertised by circular county-wide.

4th of July at Blowing Rock, North Carolina. Be sure you are there or you will miss lots of fun. Flag raising, racing, 'climbing the Greasy Pole', and lots of other amusements; Plenty to see and Everything good to eat. Exercises begin at 12 o'clock with the tolling of the bells and continue until 10 o'clock at night. Stores closed from 11:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Fun for everybody. Everybody come and have the time of your life.¹³¹

Bands and the Fourth of July just naturally go together, and in 1915 the Blowing Rock Band Boys began blowing their horns. In March, they announced "an entertainment" to raise funds for uniforms, "consisting of a 'genuine' minstrel show with burnt-cork music to 'beat the band,' stump speeches, side-splitting jokes, in fact all the features belonging to a modern, up-to-date, successful show." The next year, the town fathers agreed to erect a bandstand downtown, allowing Band Boy concerts to become a regular part of summer evening fun. ¹³³

Baseball was the only popular team sport, with both the town and the school fielding teams. The Blowing Rock Cubs played teams from Boone, Aho, Bamboo, and the Appalachian Training School. The *Watauga Democrat* even praised the Cubs in 1923, after a brilliant display of offensive firepower left Mt. Zion battered and wounded. Final score — Blowing Rock Cubs 60 — Mt. Zion 14.¹³⁴ The most enjoyable games, however, may have been between town and school, when there could be no real losers. The first line score reported in the county comes from one of these match-ups, played May 12, 1928.¹³⁵

School Licks Town

In an exciting ten-inning game last Saturday, the Blowing Rock school baseball team defeated the town team by a score of 11 to 9. Although both teams were a little out of practice, they played good ball and made some neat plays, among which was a double play by the high school team. Bynum Crisp got the longest hit, a home run to left field.

The line-ups:

High schools Donald Greene, rf; Bynum Crisp, c; Clarence Greene, 2kb; Lawrence Bolick, 3b; William Lentz, p; William Holshouser, ss; Stewart Bolick, cf; Grayson Story, lf; Glenn Coffey, 1b.

Town: Fred Mays, cf; Ray, 3b; L. Ross, ss; Howard Drentine, c; Hank Ward, 1b; G. Lentz, p; Spencer Greene, 2b; Ed Pitts, rf; Claud Greene and B.K. Jenkins, lf.

The score by innings:

On the Greens at Green Park

In the eyes of many summer visitors, the one attraction which Blowing Rock lacked to make it a first-class resort was a golf course. The United States Golf Association had been founded in 1904, and nearby Linville constructed a course in the 1890s. The logical place for a Blowing Rock course, and probably the only geographically feasible location, was adjacent to the grand Green Park Hotel.

David J. Craig, L.P. Henkel, and C.V. Henkel had begun their careers modestly with the Henkel and Craig Livestock Company in Statesville. Each had business acumen and they quickly moved into the automobile business. By 1913, they were able to parlay their business success into the purchase of the Green Park Hotel and 365 surrounding acres, under the official title of the Blowing Rock Development Company.





Mules, oxen, horses, wagons, dynamite and plenty of muscle were needed to fashion a golf course from the Appalachian Forest.

In 1915, the Company signed an agreement with Green Park neighbor Rufus L. Patterson to construct a nine-hole golf course on their adjoining lands. Patterson supplied land for five holes, paid their construction costs, and contracted for 5/9ths of any profits. The Company provided the rest. Additionally, agreement was reached that if the nine-hole course was a success, it would be expanded to a full eighteen holes. Seven years later, in 1922, a decision was made to expand to eighteen holes. Patterson provided the land near Norwood Circle on which present holes one through three, parts of four, five, and six, seventeen, eighteen and the clubhouse are located. He also agreed to forego any profits in return for permanent access to twenty playing passes. The Company agreed to pay all construction costs for the expansion.¹³⁶

Building a golf course in the North Carolina mountains produced some peculiar problems. The grass was naturally of excellent quality; it was the same bluegrass which had tempted summer herders up the steep passes generations before. Unfortunately, the land was covered with forest. The trees were cut out and hauled off by mules and oxen and the remaining multitude of stumps had to be blasted out with dynamite. The work animals then pulled drag pans to level the course before the grass could finally be reseeded. The holes were filled in, but the inevitable settling over the years caused depressions and hollows in the fairways.

Sand traps were not practical, because the sand had to be hauled in from "down the mountain," and would quickly wash away in highland thunderstorms. Instead, golfers were faced with grass and rhododendron traps—more picturesque, and infinitely more aggravating.

Wooden tees are a relatively late innovation. The course provided at each hole a terra cotta pipe about two feet tall and eighteen inches in diameter filled with sand. A two-and-a-half gallon galvanized bucket full of water was above the pipe. At first, golfers molded their own tees of wet sand by hand. Progress brought small cups with which to mold a tee.

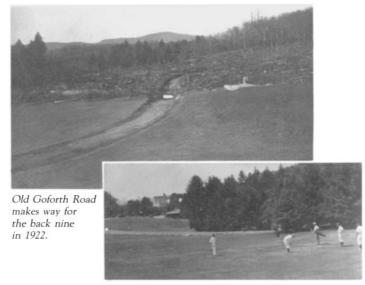
Local youths flocked to the course for a chance to caddy, with golfers choosing between thirty to forty eager candidates. Caddies would fight to double their wages by

carrying two bags. Eighteen holes would earn them 75 cents and a shot at the hoped-for 25 cent tip.

While the golf course catered primarily to the pleasure of summer visitors and their guests, the Blowing Rock Improvement Company made a point of maintaining it as a public course. Even after the Country Club affiliated with the course in 1950, their lease stipulated continued public access. The Country Club did not buy the course outright until 1973. Since that time, it has been maintained with loving care and has primarily served club members and guests.¹³⁷

Mingling with the Mountaineers

Most Blowing Rock natives in 1900 were not town dwellers. They lived in the surrounding country on small farms, and were rightfully proud of their self-sufficiency. John Walt Gragg, born in 1882, reminisced about growing up before the full impact of tourism had been felt.



Golfers enjoy a day on the links as a Model T cruises past on the Turnpike. (Green Park Hotel in the background)

Back then we raised nearly everything we had to eat. The whole family would work in the garden and then each would help in the harvest. We would dry everything in the sun, it was the only way we had to preserve anything. The beans would be hung up on strings and when they turned dark and got very dry, we called them leather breeches. They were really good on a cold winter day, cooked with a chunk of pork. I remember how good fried apple pies were after you soaked the dried apples overnight....

I worked in the logging business many a day for ten hours or more and made sixty cents. I know we could go to the store with a horse and a sled and for ten dollars you could buy everything you needed to make out the winter. You got a sack of coffee, one hundred pounds of flour, fifty pounds of salt, twenty-five pounds of sugar....We made the best maple syrup from our own trees, we had bear and deer meat to eat, not to mention trout from the streams, and wild turkey and grouse from the woods.¹³⁸

Tourism radically changed the mountaineer's way of life. The first summer home owners or "cottagers" as they were known, were largely Southern patrician families escaping Dixie heat. The W.W. Stringfellows and the Ogden Edwards were from Alabama, Moses and Bertha Cone from Baltimore. George W. Gage was a prominent member of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Dr. and Mrs. Carter came to Blowing Rock from Massachusetts for health reasons, as did many of the early cottagers. These families drew the country people into the cash economy of the town in order to satisfy their basic food requirements. As early as 1897, Lenoir minister I.W. Thomas reported that "Blowing Rock was alive with people, horses, and vehicles. Some were lounging, some walking, some driving, some on bicycles, while others were drawing or sketching. Vendors were on hand in large numbers with melons, grapes, apples, peaches, beans, and tomatoes. Some estimate that the visitors spend as much as \$1,000 a day." 139

To many local people, the wealthy visitors must have appeared entirely foreign. Mary Nelson Carter published a book entitled *North Carolina Sketches* in 1900, which earned her some criticism for insensitivity due to its heavy use of dialect and emphasis on the picturesque nature of the poor mountaineer. Her work actually demonstrates a good deal of understanding for the cultural differences which were at work. The following account is of a bemused country woman's experience with an artist who was studying at the Elliott Daingerfield art school:

"Is that a ghost or a cow?" I asked, pointing to a moving object on the hillside.

"T'ain't neither one," replied Mrs. Smith. "It's one o'them artist fellers paintin' picturs. The mountings is plum full of 'em," she added. "A body'd think they could git some kind o'work to do if they tried. Some on 'em's right biggotty..." 141 Mrs. Smith continued reminiscing:

"When I were young, one o'them artist fellers used to come up here summers. Us gals done a sight o'what he called

posin' for him. But, Lor' me, as I done told Ma, I'd a heap ruther work in the corn. A body gets plum tired standin' or sittin' still. Them drawin's he made haddn't no more look o'me than that dog's got. I always let on like I thought they had, though, for it ain't polite to hurt a body's feelin's. He were a mighty kind man hisself...."

Mrs. Smith shaded her eyes with her hand while she surveyed our artist neighbor at his work.

"That feller's been settin' over there all the mornin," she began. "I see him when I come up to hunt the cow. That white thing you see is his umbrell. I reckon he's afraid the sun'll fade him," she added, chuckling. "I asked one o'the boarder ladies t'other day what she done put powder on her face for. She laughed, and said it were to keep her from fadin," said Mrs. Smith.

Then, pushing back her sunbonnet and wiping her face on her apron, she added: "The sun *is* mighty hot today. Hope it won't fade my gownd," she added, laughing heartily at her own joke. "I got a better one, but I keep *it* to wear to preachin' and Sunday school." ¹⁴¹

If the students of Elliott Daingerfield's art school inspired local humor, imagine what the local folk would have thought about this account from the travelogue of Margaret W. Morley, which was published in 1913 under the title of *The Carolina Mountains*. While discussing her stay in Blowing Rock, she wrote:

At the back of the Grandfather, berries are important in our daily life. We eat them as they grow, and also prepare them in many ways. We make discoveries in culinary aesthetics as well as in cosmic philosophy, dealing with blackberries.

There is a certain sensuous pleasure to be derived from the scratches of a berry patch. The hot rip of the thorn through the skin, the crimson line of blood that appears at the surface, but does not overflow, the tingling sensation that courses over your whole body for a moment, — for this you willingly endure the smart that comes for hours afterwards whenever your wounded members touch anything. Moreover, you would endure the scratches so soon forgotten for the memory that lasts of the feel of the sun, of the beleaguering fragrances, and for the rich booty you carry home.¹⁴²

While the mountaineer was willing to work with and for this unusual assortment of people, he would retain a cautious suspicion to this very day. When one of Blowing Rock's earliest philanthropic families, the Stringfellows, financed a club room in the Mission House basement for the use of local young people, Reverend Savage found himself forced to conclude, "it is strange to say, these true friends of this town have not met with the encouragement they have had reason to expect, response is a better word, for most of their propositions for the uplift and development of the place as a resort have been met with statuesque reserve and stolid indifference." Certainly, local people were immensely grateful for support given to schools and churches, but they were suspicious of change, especially when it would alter traditional ways of doing things.

In the summer of 1913, the town sponsored an extraordinary event. An educational Mid-Summer Conference which drew 2,500 guests and gave Mayor G.M. Sudderth the chance to address this issue of change. His keynote speech was made "in defense of our mountain people against the slanderous misrepresentation of would-be missionaries who come here in the guise of friends, and then write columns of sympathetic dope for northern papers bubbling



Cycling in the Village

over with sympathy for 'the poor depraved mountain whites." 144

Even long-time Episcopal minister William Savage, a respected and staunch supporter of Blowing Rock in the early 1900s, was not above criticism by local residents for unfairly stereotyping mountain people. He wrote a lengthy letter to the *Watauga Democrat* in 1911 to rebut charges that "he took a photograph of an 'exceptionally poor and ragged family,' their tumbled down log cabin as a background for the group, and sent this 'interesting' picture up north to 'show' how the people of Western North Carolina live!"¹⁴⁵

Suffice it to say, this is still a sensitive issue today, with many academics spending a great deal of time analyzing how Appalachia is depicted by writers and producers in books, movies, and on television.

Crafty Commodities

Just as they once adapted to the hardship of mountain living, Blowing Rock's people also adapted to the new economic opportunities tourism and progress brought. Native crafts were expanded to take advantage of the new markets. "Galacking," picking the galax plant which was widely used in floral decorations (especially at Christmas), became a major pursuit. George Robbins received an order in 1902 for two cases which were shipped to England for the coronation of King Edward VII. Reverend Savage advertised galax leaves through Southern Churchman magazine and sent leaves to Teddy Roosevelt at the White House. HAC. Hayes served as a major wholesaler until at least 1924, doing thousands of dollars of galax business each season when a bundle of 10,000 leaves sold for seven to eight dollars.

Mountain flora drew other entrepreneurs. After Blowing Rock went dry, Thorton Ingle recovered from the loss of his saloon by starting a laurel root pipe factory in 1909.¹⁴⁹ Grover Robbins spent part of his time in the 1920s founding the Wildwood Nursery Company.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Reverend Savage encouraged the preservation of traditional crafts and acted as a wholesaler for local people, taking their products on consignment to neighboring states. He also arranged to have them advertised for mail order business to New England states.¹⁵¹

Lena Reeves, the daughter of the town druggist, worked with Savage in organizing an exchange in the Randall Memorial Workshop; a craft center named in honor of artist W.C. Randall. The Workshop opened in 1907 with facilities for spinning, weaving, basketry, and woodwork. The Blowing Rock Exchange, staffed by Miss Reeves and supported by the Boogher sisters and Mrs. Stringfellow, opened in 1910. Local people sold their items through the shop, with a small commission on each sale paying for overhead and such public-use items as "a bell for the school house, an attractive rustic shelter for the town pump, and other articles."

It Rained For Three Days and Nights

When disaster struck, whether natural or man-made, the Blowing Rock community bonded together. The Flood of 1916 and The Great War provided plenty of opportunity for the people to extend their natural compassion and neighborly concern.

Mid-July of 1916 saw the worst rainstorms ever to hit Watauga County. On the sixteenth, the Watauga Democrat began a full-page article: "To undertake to describe the destruction wrought in Watauga by the terrific wind and rain storm on Friday and Saturday last would be futile, indeed....But from all quarters heard come tidings of fearful devastation: crops destroyed, buildings washed away, fine orchards absolutely demolished." The rain fell steadily for three days and nights. Water pouring down chimneys was collected in wash tubs and shuttled back outside to join the streams in the streets. Telegraph and telephone lines from Blowing Rock to both Lenoir and Boone were washed away, and all communication with the outside world went with them.

The Trout Lake dam at the Cone Estate burst under the pressure, and water thundered down Flannery Fork. It would not be replaced in Bertha Cone's lifetime. Fortunately, the dam at Bass Lake held, as did the old wooden dam at Stringfellow Lake by Chetola.¹⁵⁴ The Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike was in a shambles. Fred Newnham attempted the first auto trip up the road to Green Park after the storm, and described travel conditions in a letter to a Greensboro friend.

The damage up here from rains and high water was even worse than below and we were not expecting this at all. The first ten miles of this road bordered a creek and many miles of this was just like a stream bed.

The water had washed away entire fields, undermined houses, and a church and school and carried them down stream and left them stranded when the water receded. Twice where landslides occurred we had teams to pull us through. Once we were stuck in the middle of a stream we were fording and it was half an hour before we could get help.

After getting out of this place we began to climb the mountain. Landslides were all along the route, and some places washed so badly that there was hardly room to get by. To add more excitement, when five miles from Green Park a heavy shower broke upon us.

We got within 1 1/2 miles from the Hotel when we stuck in a landslide, and as Providence would have it, the mail man came along, and with his help we pulled out. Reaching the Hotel, the people looked at us as if we had risen from the dead.¹⁵⁵

The most lasting effect of the storm was felt in the lumber economy. The great flume was damaged beyond repair. The Whiting Lumber Company in Shulls Mills lost thousands of dollars of machinery, and narrow gauge tracks were washed away throughout the county. The Grandin Lumber Company sold out to a British firm shortly after the flood, and operations on their old lands never fully recovered. Much of the best virgin timber had already been cut, and while the industry would continue on a smaller scale, the largest companies chose not to renew their investments. Those who had survived relatively intact helped the hardest-hit. A benefit dance was held at the Green Park Hotel, tourists and townspeople joining to ease the pain caused by Mother Nature's anger. 157

"Over There"

World War I, the conflict that spanned the globe, changed the physical and psychological make-up of our community. Blowing Rock boys left their farms and family stores and went overseas to "fight the Hun." At home, the Village became less insular, as relief agencies and patriotic rallies created a new consciousness of needs and problems far beyond the horizons of the highlands.

For a small mountain town, Blowing Rock's contribution was large. The roster of men who served included Hermon Crump, Melvin Cox, William Ward, Letcher Benfield, Malcolm Holshouser, Walter Pendley, Fred Austin, Niley Cook, Letcher Vannoy, Ross Edmiston, Claude Teague, Russell Teague, Paul Klutz, Clark Brown, Charles Downs, and "Mr. Holloway from the Post Office." Many enlisted in the same unit in order to stick together overseas — Battery E of the 113th Field Artillery.¹⁵⁹

Those left behind vigorously supported the war effort. A Red Cross benefit at the Green Park Hotel raised \$101, charging fifty cents a head admission. Red Cross volunteers knitted clothes and made pillows to send overseas. In The Sandy Flat school was the site of a war benefit rally, with patriotic speeches and songs. In July of 1918, a French officer, Major Dupont, spoke at the Presbyterian Church in a program headed by W.W. Stringfellow. In September, a large Patriotic Convention was held downtown, with speeches by visitors from throughout the state, among them, Governor T.W. Bickett.

Even after victory was secured, Blowing Rock was constantly reminded of obligations to the world community. The local branch of the Red Cross led drives for aid to the Belgians, the Armenian-Syrian Relief Fund, and the "suffering Serbians." National and world politics had moved out of the realm of the Debating Society and had touched everyone.

Survival in the Modern Age

Truly, growing up is hard to do. The great changes encountered by Blowing Rock in the space of a single generation caused unavoidable strains. The ability of our citizens to adapt and grow under pressure is exactly what enabled the Village to develop into the unique community it is today.

The Reverend William Savage waxed eloquent from his ministerial pulpit on the declining morals of the younger generation. He lamented "the immodest custom women have of dressing now-a-days, the unattractive, mannish way they have of riding astride, the filthy practice of snuff dipping, the desecration of the Sabbath day by the excessive use of gasoline on Sunday, the practice of opening the stores and soft drink stands on the first day of the week, dancing, card playing, and gossiping at other times." Young women were guilty of "attending the weekly dances in Music Hall without the precaution of securing a chaperon every time," while boys engaged in "boisterous ball games on Sunday afternoons to the horror of the Christians of the town."

Savage was not the only one outspoken on this matter. Mayor Sudderth presented a talk in 1913 entitled, "Our Boys — whose fault if they go wrong?," at a public meeting devoted to cleaning up the town. In his discourse he warned, "yet with filth moved and bad odors dispelled from sight and smell, there are 'dark clouds' on the moral horizon, which 'clouds' can be dispersed only by the bright beams from the 'Sun of Righteousness.' "168 The nefarious practice of gossip was also attacked by the good Mayor, when he proposed a "Tend to Your Own Business Society" at

a town meeting, whose emblem would be a padlock locking a tulip.¹⁶⁹

By 1915, the problem was thought to be serious enough to warrant an educational effort to reverse the tide of moral decay. Many of the town's leading citizens met and developed a program which was outlined in the county paper. "It is proposed," they reported, "to have a series of conferences during the winter, one for the parents of our town to discuss the best methods of child training, another for the young men to break up the cigarette habit, idleness, vulgarity, and profanity among the little boys of our town, another for the young women to discuss plans for a series of entertainments and amusements from which dancing will be eliminated....to take place in the Public Library, which is to be the center of all work, whether for church or community at large, where teas, receptions, and entertainments of various kinds might be given for the purpose of bringing together in a social way our much divided community." 170

No further mention is found of this ambitious plan due to an unlikely chain of events. First, in December, 1915, for the first time in memory, all church services were cancelled in town due to a smallpox scare. Shortly thereafter, the first large group of Blowing Rock boys enlisted in the service. Those two events may have relieved some of the pressure which was caused by youthful exuberance.¹⁷¹

The perception of a serious problem still persisted, however. Burglars entered the store of Mayor D.P. Coffey in October, 1916, blew the safe, and escaped with \$80. "The community is quite wrought up over the robbery," Savage wrote, "the boldest ever in the history of the town, only petty stealing falling to our lot heretofore, and people who have slept with doors open or unlocked now lock and even bar them, no longer enjoying the proverbial peace and quiet of bygone days." ¹⁷²

When the town ordinances were revised in 1917, a curfew was established in an effort to keep children off the streets and out of trouble. Article 15 stated; "That it shall be unlawful for any child under the age of fifteen years to be upon the streets of the Town of Blowing Rock after the hour of eight o'clock P.M. or to be loafing more than one half hour each day upon the streets of said town." The curfew age was raised two years in 1922, but was applied to "all stores, restaurants, and public places," which now had to close at 8 o'clock on weekdays, 9 o'clock on Saturday. Perhaps due to the dances held at Dr. Reeves' establishment, drug stores were exempted. Extensive blue laws were also enacted in 1920 and reaffirmed in 1922, seriously limiting Sunday business and entertainment.¹⁷³

With morality in question, the issue of alcohol consumption once again became a dominant concern to the community. For the townspeople who were intent on maintaining Blowing Rock's good reputation, lawlessness was inherent in the liquor trade. A Law Enforcement League was formed in 1922 after a meeting at the Baptist Church, with an initial membership of forty-seven. They pledged themselves to eradicating the "great evil" of alcohol. They were led by prominent businessmen: W.L. Holshouser was President, T.H. Coffey, Vice-President, and J.H. Winkler secretary.¹⁷⁴

Some citizens directed their anger and frustration over rapid social change into other channels. Because Watauga County had a small black population, racial issues which had affected other communities had never been a serious problem in Blowing Rock. While there was a large seasonal black population, they were mostly servants of summer visitors or cooks, musicians, or staff affiliated with the hotels. Local blacks could and did vote, but the May town elections and November general elections took place off-season, so the political issue of the black vote was never important.

Nevertheless, the Ku Klux Klan did organize in the county in the 1920s. Their major concerns were Prohibition and the decline of conservative Christian morality. The *Watauga Democrat* gave favorable front-page coverage to cross-burnings, and commended the Klan for working with revenue agents in breaking up the illegal liquor trade.¹⁷⁵ The praise was muted only after a county man, who was white, was beaten to death for refusing to allow his children to attend Sunday school.¹⁷⁶

At a time when the Klan was experiencing a resurgence throughout the poor, rural south, Blowing Rock Klansmen attended religious revival meetings in full regalia, made speeches supporting evangelical work, and made cash contributions.¹⁷⁷



Thomas Coffey, Lee Robbins, Thomas Coffey Sr., and Jim Sudderth relax on Main Street.

Ironically, the only significant violence the town experienced during the 1920s was the result of a wild holiday celebration during the Christmas of 1924. Frontpage headlines declared: DYNAMITE RENDS BUSINESS HOUSES:

At 2 a.m. Christmas morning the citizens of Blowing Rock were aroused from their slumbers by the explosion of dynamite on the streets.

Upon investigation it was found that a number of young men in a Ford touring car were throwing sticks of lighted dynamite in such directions as they thought might result in the most damage to property. The first explosion was in front of the Reeves building, and the car moved on up the street where practically every plate glass in the new post

office building was demolished, to say nothing of shattered and cracked walls and smashed glass of smaller dimensions. Mr. Craig was perhaps the heaviest loser, due only to the fact that he had the most glass to break. The Bank and

the Holshouser and Green stores did not escape the vandals. Each in turn got the effects of the super explosive, which left ruin in its wake. The car passed on out to the Yonahlossee Road, and was seen no more that night at least. It was discovered when day broke that the dynamite had been stolen from the powder house of the state road crew working near the town, there being a lot of it missing.¹⁷⁸

A bang-up Christmas, indeed, but minus the good will traditionally associated with the celebration.

A Tough Little Town

Blowing Rock approached the 1930s as a tough and tested little town. A large influx of tourists had rattled her briefly, but she soon regained composure. She stayed afloat through the greatest flood in memory and the fire of 1923 only tempered her. Even dynamite couldn't destroy her foundations. Blowing Rock was poised to enter the 30s confident of growth, and prosperity, and with a sense of unique heritage.



Beauty and commerce mingle on Main Street in 1933.



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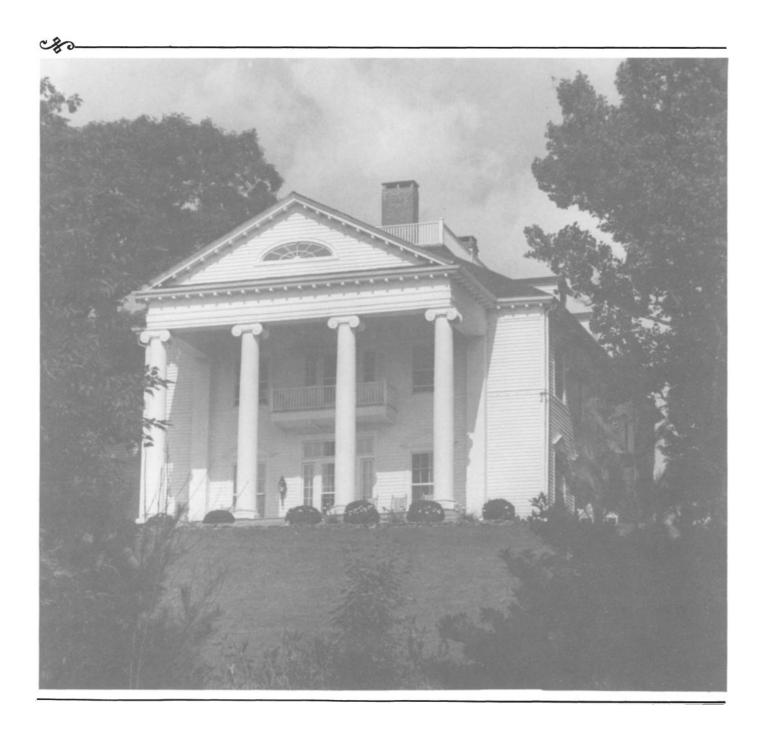
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- 176. Watauga Democrat, September 8, 1927
- 177. Watauga Democrat, November 25, 1926
- 178. Watauga Democrat, January 1, 1925



CHAPTER III

Great Estates and Prominent People

Ultimately, people mold the true character of any town, and accordingly, Blowing Rock has had an exceptionally vibrant and intriguing past. Numerous individuals, indeed entire families, of considerable means and influence, have contributed to the shaping of this quaint, but vigorous, modern-day community.

Blowing Rock, with its captivating physical appeal—its majestic scenery and invigorating climate—has continuously attracted these accomplished families of rare individuals, lending to it an atmosphere of unique historical vitality, interest and richness. These prominent and sometimes controversial citizens have been essential threads in this Village's colorful tapestry.

Time and again, Blowing Rock has been the fortunate recipient of grand philanthropic gestures, reflecting the benefactors' love for and devotion to the town and its native inhabitants. Hence, there exists an undeniable bond between these well-known families and this charismatic mountain community.

Some of the more notable personalities associated with Blowing Rock, their lifestyles, and their landmark estates are highlighted in this chapter. It is, however, all the people in this unique Village's past that have created its special appeal. It is all the people, past and present, who are at the heart of its distinctive charm.

Chetola

"No jewel that ever bedecked the fair breast of a princess could be one-thousandth part so softly radiant as this gem-garden of flowers, lake, and woodland that is clasped to the bosom of these mighty mountains."

The above quote, taken from a travel brochure written in the early 1900s, describes one of the most beautiful places in western North Carolina—Chetola Estate. Chetola, whose Cherokee name means "haven of rest," changed ownership several times throughout the years, but all who owned this mountain wonderland worked for the betterment of the Blowing Rock community, shaping and molding the Village as we know it today.

The property now known as Chetola was first purchased in 1846 by Lot Estes.³ The original deed shows that Mr. Estes bought 100 acres from the state of North Carolina for the astronomical price of 5 cents an acre!⁴ Located on the legendary Daniel Boone Trail, the only two structures on the property at the time of purchase were a horse stable and a way station for freight, passengers and the mail coach.⁵

The Esteses were early, prominent citizens of Blowing Rock and were related, through marriage, to the Greenes, Watauga County's first permanent settlers. Lot Estes married the former Miss Chaney Greene, a daughter of Benjamin Greene.⁶

After the Civil War, Len Estes developed his father's property, building a dam, pond, mill, and four-room family home consisting of two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a living room. Eventually, he remodeled and enlarged his home, turning it into a boarding house, the second in the Village. He then built a row of summer guest cottages behind the main house. According to Dr. Chalmers Davidson, a seasonal resident of Blowing Rock whose family first visited the Village during the summer of 1884, "Mr. Estes' Mill was the place to stay in Blowing Rock 100 years ago. In fact, Len Estes' summer resort accommodations were one of the few places on the mountain for health-hunters from the Piedmont and the flat lands." This new summer resort was called "Silverlake" and it became renowned for its trout fishing. The scenery and sports fishing attracted such health-seekers as Governor Zeb Vance who extolled the virtues of the establishment and wealthy merchant Harvey Smith of Chester, South Carolina who complained that Mr. Estes' bedrooms were so small he had to step out on the porch to turn round.8

Not only did Silverlake provide the much-needed rest and relaxation for weary travelers, it also housed the only grist mill in Blowing Rock and the surrounding area. According to Luther Church, a native of Blowing Rock who lived on the Chetola property for 18 years and whose grandfather ran the mill during the late 1800s, people would

come from miles around to have their corn ground into meal and their wheat into flour. Mr. Church's grandfather would not charge money for his services, but instead would take a portion of what he ground for payment. This method of payment was called "tolling" and was very popular and essential to residents in earlier years. During the winters, Silverlake supplied ice for the community. With no refrigeration, residents used ice houses to store perishables. At Silverlake, you could buy 100 pounds of ice for 10 cents. 10

Around 1892, the Esteses sold their property to William Whittingham Stringfellow and his wife, Susie.¹¹ The Stringfellows, from Anniston, Alabama, were to become prominent and influential summer residents.

William Stringfellow was born in Hyde Park, New York, the son of an Episcopal priest. Dr. Horace Stringfellow was rector at the Episcopal Church in Hyde Park and young William attended Sunday school with the children of famous, wealthy New Yorkers (two of whom were the sons of Teddy Roosevelt.) William's mother was the former Miss Mary Green of England, an intellectual who had dreams of pursuing missionary work in China.¹²

William was one of six children. Like his father and brothers, he was an imposing gentleman, over 6 feet tall, who possessed a wonderful sense of humor. Some say he favored General Grant, others argue that he resembled Chief Justice Hughes. Hughes.

William suffered from tuberculosis and was often sick as a child. Unable to attend school, he was taught at home by his mother. A "born teacher," she taught young William how to read and write. During the Civil War, the family moved from New York to Virginia and finally settled in Montgomery, Alabama, where Dr. Stringfellow served as rector of St. John's Episcopal Church from 1869 until his death in 1894.¹⁵

At the age of 17, William went to work in a railroad office in Montgomery. After learning the business, he was elected president of the Squibby Frog and Switch Company, a position he held for 30 years.¹⁶

In 1882, he married Miss Susie Parker, an Alabama aristocrat and daughter of wealthy Alabama banker and business leader Duncan T. Parker.¹⁷ Miss Parker, in contrast to her husband, was quite small with brilliant blue eyes. It is said that she "exuded blue-blooded charm." In 1890, Mrs. Stringfellow's father died and, at his request, William assumed the presidency of the First National Bank in Anniston, Alabama. Through the years, Mr. Stringfellow's health continued to decline with his tuberculosis becoming more debilitating. Mrs. Stringfellow believed that cooler weather would improve her husband's health, so she persuaded him to purchase the mountain retreat known as Silverlake.²⁰

The Stringfellows renamed the property Chetola, for this was to become their "haven of rest," and transformed the Estes' Boarding House into one of the most beautiful private dwellings in Blowing Rock.²¹

The Stringfellows' dream villa was an architectural challenge because it represented the synthesis of three houses. The original boarding house, once a simple four-room home, was remodeled, greatly enlarged, and incorporated into a new structure.²² The new eight-bedroom Chateau now included four or five baths, a dining room, living room, ballroom, billiard room, library, den/card room, and an adjoining kitchen which had an enormous pantry



Susie Parker Stringfellow (right) with her sisters Minnie Parker Hegemeyer (center) and Lillie Parker Noble

and walk-in fireplace where all the cooking was done.²³ The oak and maple which grew abundantly on the Estate were used in crafting the beautiful parquet floors.²⁴ Exposed ceiling beams and solid wood paneling provided friends and visitors alike with a feeling of warmth and hospitality that reflected the nature of its owners and the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains. Numerous fireplaces located throughout the villa kept the chill of summer evenings at bay. 25 Chetola was one of the few places at the time to have running water and electricity.²⁶ The water came from an open mountain spring which ran continuously into a cement reservoir. Because the reservoir was higher than the main house, when a faucet was turned in a bathroom or in the kitchen, water flowed into the house as needed.²⁷ Before 1912, the Stringfellow villa was lighted by acetylene gas, but eventually electricity was produced by water power from the mill.²⁸

Mr. Stringfellow loved the outdoors and had a strong interest in horticulture and landscape architecture. The Stringfellow touch can be seen in a wide variety of trees and shrubs he imported from Europe, including English maples and a species of rhododendron not found indigenous to western North Carolina.²⁹ He enlarged the mill pond and in keeping with tradition, stocked it with the best trout in the area. The creeks and streams that fill the 7-acre lake flow into the New River and eventually make their way to the mighty Mississippi.³⁰ The Stringfellow lake was a popular spot with the young people of Blowing Rock. Swimming was the sport during the summer months; ice skating was preferred in the winter.31 In addition to the main house,



Stringfellow built a spring house, smoke house, servants' house, caretaker's home, and large horse stable.³²

The Stringfellows entertained lavishly, hosting huge parties for friends and neighbors. One of Mr. Stringfellow's closest friends was Elliott Daingerfield, the illustrious painter, who also had a summer residence in Blowing Rock.³³ It is believed that the parents of these two gentlemen knew each other when both families were living in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Mr. Stringfellow's father was rector at the Episcopal Church in Harpers Ferry during the Civil War and Mr. Daingerfield's parents, also Episcopalian, were living in Harpers Ferry at this time.³⁴

Reminiscing about her childhood in Blowing Rock, Miss Marjorie Daingerfield, Elliott's daughter, writes "during the Stringellow era, there were many colorful parties, the entire grounds strung with Japanese lanterns," and Chalmers Davidson was told that the earliest queen of Blowing Rock society was Mrs. Stringfellow.³⁶

While the Stringfellows enjoyed Blowing Rock's social scene and loved to entertain, they were devout Episcopalians and very active in the Blowing Rock Episcopal Church, The Church of the Holy Spirit.³⁷

Mrs. Stringfellow was a Sunday school teacher and treasurer of the church.³⁸ Having no children of her own, she took a special interest in the children of Blowing Rock and pioneered a program to help neglected children of the area.³⁹ She was always willing to offer help and comfort to those in need.⁴⁰ Both Mr. and Mrs. Stringfellow were interested and concerned for the welfare of Watauga County citizens and contributed to such worthy causes as the Red Cross and the Watauga County Home, which housed, clothed and fed the "unfortunates" of Boone during the early 1900s.⁴¹ In addition, Mrs. Stringfellow organized a Blowing Rock School Betterment Association, and along with Miss Elsie and Miss Ethel Boogher, organized the first Blowing Rock Exchange, the Blowing Rock Civic Improvement League, and the local branch of the Camp Fire Girls.⁴²

The Stringfellows' genuine interest in the welfare of the community was a hallmark of their life together. In 1914, they organized the first Blowing Rock Boy Scout Troop, which met regularly at Chetola.⁴³ In 1916, they donated money to convert a part of the basement of the public library into a cozy club room for the youth.⁴⁴ In 1918, Mr. Stringfellow gave all public school students with perfect attendance five dollars each.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the Stringfellows' generosity was not always accepted by local citizens in the spirit in which it was offered. An editorial written in the Watauga Democrat in 1916 states, "...it is strange to say, these two friends of this town have not met with the encouragement they have had reason to expect, ...most of their propositions for the uplift and development of the place as a resort have been met with statuesque reserve and stolid indifference, and yet these good friends continue to do for us what, financially, we are unable to do for ourselves."⁴⁶

As noted earlier, William Stringfellow had a special love for life close to the land and he enjoyed sharing his knowledge of agriculture with area residents. In 1917, he wrote a letter to the *Watauga Democrat* encouraging local farmers to plant potatoes. "You cannot too much impress upon the people of our county the importance of planting large crops of potatoes and onions, both of which, with proper attention, will give better results in Watauga County than any place in the south I know of."⁴⁷

In the early 1900s, because Watauga County was secluded and not easily reached by railroad or highway, Mr. Stringfellow felt a sense of responsibility to share with the County new ideas and innovations discovered in Anniston during the winter months. He was a member of the Watauga County Road Commission and in 1917 gave a talk in Boone informing residents that in some cities they were using oil to improve their roads. Perhaps Mr. Stringfellow was a little ahead of his time. The person who recalls hearing this speech writes, "I knew it would be a long time before Watauga County would waste any oil or anything else on our mountain trails." 48

As the years passed, the mountain climate restored William Stringfellow's health and he was reported to be "cured" of tuberculosis.⁴⁹ Susie Stringfellow wanted to build a new Episcopal Church in Blowing Rock to thank God for returning her husband's health. The parish broke ground for the Church in 1918, but Mrs. Stringfellow never saw the completion of her offering. She died on February 7, 1920 from Bright's Disease, a condition from which she suffered for many years.⁵⁰ William supervised the continued construction of the Church, now a memorial to his wife.

The rock work on the church was largely executed by Marshall Foster. The story has been told that when it came time to lay the keystone in the arch of the main entrance, Marshall could not find a stone which suited him. At that time, the Presbyterians, whose church was across the street, were doing some stone work as well. Marshall, it is said, "borrowed" a stone from the Presbyterians' pile. Hence, the Presbyterians say the keystone of the Episcopal Church is a Presbyterian rock!⁵¹

The following words, written by Judge George W. Gage of the South Carolina Supreme Court, in dedication to Mrs. Stringfellow, are inscribed on a plaque hanging inside the beautiful memorial. "She was an admirer of the beautiful, a lover of the good, a defender of the right, a foe to injustice and a helper of distress wherever she found it." ⁵²

Upon her death, Susie Stringfellow left \$1000 to the Grandfather Orphanage and several bequests to Watauga County citizens.⁵³ The Susie P. Stringfellow Memorial Church was consecrated on August 7, 1921 by Bishop J. M. Horner.⁵⁴ Thanks to Mrs. Stringfellow's faith and good will, and to that of her husband, the citizens of Blowing Rock had a beautiful, new church in which to worship.

In 1919, due to his wife's failing health, William Stringfellow sold Chetola to the Holt family of Burlington, North Carolina. The Holts, owning the property for less than four years, resold the magnificent Estate in 1923 to Charlottean, Walter L. Alexander, the developer of Mayview Park. Story has it that Mr. Alexander renamed the Estate "Had-er-way" because it was his wife, Ernestine, who persuaded him to purchase the property.⁵⁵

Ms. Annie Smith Bomie, in her book *Inspirations from Blowing Rock*, describes the Estate when owned by the Alexanders:





Had-er-way is a vision of unrivaled beauty. Named as a tribute to its mistress fair, the miniature lake reflects lilies and swans with a setting of loveliness rare. The grounds are like a bit of Eden, a gem in landscape gardening art; an exquisite pleasure to the tourist from which he is loath to part.⁵⁶

Unfortunately, Walter Alexander died prematurely in 1925. While Mrs. Alexander professed a profound love for the Estate, she couldn't bear to live alone in the large villa, so once again Chetola was for sale.⁵⁷

In 1926, James Luther Snyder and his wife Alfreta purchased the property from Mrs. Alexander.⁵⁸ Mr. Snyder, like so many others, came to Blowing Rock because of its beauty and its climate. He soon became a well-known and well-liked summer resident because of his devotion to the area and its people.

James Luther Snyder was truly a self-made man. He was born on a farm in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley, near Winchester, Virginia, in 1873. He was the youngest of eleven children, the son of the late George William Snyder and Martha Woodward Snyder. He was given his first name in honor of an uncle and his middle name, Luther, in honor of the great German religious leader, Martin Luther, a man his father greatly admired.⁵⁹ He attended the Wickliffe Rectory School but withdrew before graduation to return to the farm to work with his father. He never received further education because, as he was known to say, "My father thought that girls should go on and finish school and get the benefit of a higher learning, but felt that too much education ruined a young man."⁶⁰ He stayed in Clarke County and worked with his father until the age of 27, when Mr. J. T. Lupton, a pioneer in the Coca-Cola business and brother of the girl Luther would eventually marry, persuaded him to come to Chattanooga, Tennessee, to learn the Coca-Cola bottling business.⁶¹ Mr. Snyder worked in Tennessee for a year and then moved to Atlanta, headquarters for the company, to gain further experience in this new but promising field.⁶²

James Luther Snyder was a tireless and gifted employee and his superiors, recognizing his abilities, offered him the chance to establish new bottling plants throughout the south.⁶³ They wanted to send him to Jacksonville, Florida, but Mr. Snyder preferred Charlotte, North Carolina, having visited there in 1895.⁶⁴ Years later, he would jokingly say that he chose Charlotte because it was halfway between the farm in Virginia and the plant in Atlanta. "I knew that if I did not succeed in this new business, I could either go back to the farm or back to Atlanta."

In 1902, Snyder and J. T. Lupton established a bottling plant in Charlotte with \$3,000 capital. Snyder invested \$500 he had saved in Atlanta and borrowed another \$1,000 to cover his half-interest.⁶⁶ In September of the same year, he established another partnership with the Lupton family when he married J. T.'s half-sister, Alfreta Crisman. Miss Crisman hailed from Summitt Point, Virginia, where her parents operated a large country store.⁶⁷

Luther Snyder traveled the city streets in a one-horse wagon selling Coca-Cola to merchants, competing with the local breweries and saloons. The competition was tough, but the young Snyder eventually succeeded in establishing a market for the new drink, and bottling plants were built throughout the south. With his business acumen, he eventually controlled three corporations and operated ten bottling plants. During this time, James Luther Snyder became

known as the "Coca-Cola King of the Carolinas." As successful as he was in business, Mr. Snyder never lost sight of the most important thing on earth to him—his family. He fathered six children, Rebecca, George, Virginia, Elizabeth, Luther, and James, and always found time for them and his wife. He wanted his family to be a part of his work as well, and the Coca-Cola business soon became a Snyder family business when his eldest son and three sons-in-law joined the firm. To

To escape the summer heat of Charlotte, Mr. Snyder and his family traveled to cooler locations for the summer months. The family visited such places as Asheville, Hiddenight, Waynesville, Black Mountain and Ridge Crest. Then one summer, the family visited the quaint Village of Blowing Rock. Falling in love with the area, its climate and its beauty, Snyder decided this was where he would spend the rest of his summers.⁷¹ Thus, in 1926, Luther Snyder and his wife Alfreta purchased the property known as "Had-er-way" and renamed it Chetola.⁷²

Mr. Snyder originally purchased only thirty-six acres of the Chetola property for the sum of \$36,000.⁷³ He eventually enlarged the estate to 169 acres and made several changes in its appearance.⁷⁴

In 1928, he tore down the mill, enlarged and raised the lake, and replaced the old wooden dam with a steel, concrete, and rock structure. Across the top of the dam he built a stone highway bridge over which his Ford Model "T" would travel every day to and from the Village. At first, Snyder visited his haven only during the summer months because it was almost impossible to warm the eight-bedroom mansion during the harsh winters. However, in 1935, he built a much smaller rendition of the "Big House," a place where he and friends could meet on winter weekends to socialize or to discuss business. The first story of his seven-room lodge was done completely in stone, the second completely in wood. He named this new lodge Hetola because it was his special place and companion to Mrs. Snyder's Chetola.

As his children grew older and began raising their own families, he built each a home on the Estate so that they would always be able to visit and share in the beauty of the Village. The Lodge became the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. George Snyder and children Christine, George, Jr. and Luke. In 1932, he constructed a double



home for his twin daughters and their families. These were Mr. and Mrs. Norman Bisanar and their daughters, Caroline and Katherine, and Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Jones and children Freta Anne, Reid, and Chris. This duplex was unique; Mr. Snyder, with his dry wit, furnished both sides exactly alike and named the duplex "Twinola." The W.B. Garrison house was built in 1938 for the Garrisons and children Billy, Snyder, and Lee.

Each summer, beginning in May, the families would climb the mountain from Lenoir, bringing with them servants, cooks, nannies, and chauffeurs. Each home on the Estate had a residence for these employees.⁷⁸

Chetola was a paradise for children and grown-ups alike. Mr. Snyder built the area's first privately-owned swimming pool and constructed a regulation bowling alley. Horseback riding trails wound throughout the Estate joining those on the bordering Moses H. Cone Estate. Fishing was also a popular leisure activity during the summer months. Mr. Snyder had his own hatchery and the trout in Chetola lake were rumored to be the largest in the area. The family would often hold contests to see who could catch the biggest fish. Each summer, on Mr. Snyder's birthday, the family would host a huge barbecue on the front lawn. It was always one of the big social events of the season and no one wanted to miss it.⁸¹

Among the hallmarks of Chetola were the huge, elaborate flower gardens. Only spending time with her grandchildren superseded Alfreta's love of gardening. Arbors, intertwined with flowers and Spanish ivy, stood on the grounds amidst beds of dahlias, hydrangeas, lilies, phlox, and gladiolas.⁸² In front of the "Big House" was a large bed of exotic, *Iris kaempferi*, with immense blossoms in different colors.⁸³ Alfreta could be counted on to participate

in the annual Blowing Rock Flower Show and many times went home with first prize. One particular winning entry consisted of "a vase of old-fashioned flowers, with an old Bible, a pair of spectacles and an old-fashioned glass slipper." Alfreta also loved bridge and would host bridge parties and tournaments at Chetola for the village cottagers. Be Despite her social prominence, she was a very personable, down-to-earth woman. She was "one of the nicest people you could ever hope to meet. She was not pretentious, she was like the common folk." Such were the sentiments expressed by an employee who worked nearly twenty years for the Snyder family. Be

Even though Chetola provided hours of leisure activities for its residents, it was a working Estate. Ben Church, his wife Neola, his daughter Iva, and his son James Luther (named for Mr. Snyder) were employed by the Snyders to care for the Estate. James Luther Church and his sister were the third generation of Churches to live and work at Chetola. The family had their own separate home and, in addition to being paid a salary, were allowed to use everything that was raised or grown on the Estate. Mr. Church and his son cared for the dairy cows, sheep, hogs, chickens, and horses. His wife and daughter tended to the vegetable gardens, canned green beans, tomatoes, corn, and other vegetables harvested in the Fall.⁸⁷ Legend has it that Chetola was once a camping ground for Cherokee Indians. Each Spring, when plowing the fields for planting, Ben Church and his son would uncover handfuls of arrowheads, only to toss them aside because they were not considered to be of any value.⁸⁸ Even though there was a distinct difference in how the families lived, the Churches and the Snyders became very close friends over the years and always looked forward to seeing one another in the Spring.⁸⁹

Mrs. Snyder died in 1945 after a long illness. Mr. Snyder married again in 1948, this time to the former Mrs. W.C. Petty of Charlotte, who passed away in 1951.⁹¹ Snyder continued to visit his "haven of rest" until 1957 when, at the age of 83, he died.⁹² He left Chetola to his children and eleven grandchildren and it remained in the family until 1972 when it was sold.⁹³ As in 1846, Chetola became once again a summer resort for visitors seeking refuge from the summer heat.

Mr. Snyder retired from Coca-Cola in 1940.90 He was a great businessman, but his civic endeavors and philanthropy overshadowed his success in the soft-drink business. During the Depression, he had local stone masons build a rock wall to separate the Chetola property from what is now Highway 321/Business. He paid the masons 50 cents an hour, an enormous wage at the time. It was but one small example of his efforts to help the people of Blowing Rock, who otherwise would not accept his help.94 He also hired several men from the Village each summer to work with the Churches on the Estate.95 At a time when work was almost impossible to find, those who worked for Luther Snyder were always very grateful. He was also very active in maintaining the Blowing Rock Methodist Church. After his death, stained glass windows were given to the church in his honor by the Snyder family.96

As mentioned elsewhere in this history, during the early 1900s, social mores of the day dictated that black citizens were not to socialize with the white community. Luther Snyder therefore felt a responsibility to help provide social opportunities for the black community. In 1946, he and other residents of Blowing Rock founded the Blowing Rock Community Center. Located on Possom Hollow Road, the Community Center was a place for black residents

to go for fun, rest and relaxation, a place where they were always welcome. It was also a place of worship. 98 For several years, the Snyder family was a great supporter of the Center. 99

Mr. Snyder was also an avid supporter of the Blowing Rock Community Carnival. Proceeds from this annual event went to the Community Club "for the support of the library, for civic improvements, and for relief of local distress." 100

A lover of horses and an avid equestrian, Luther Snyder was Honorary Director and president of the Blowing Rock Horse Show, guiding and directing the show through its earliest and most difficult years.¹⁰¹ To this day, the J.L. Snyder Trophy is given each year to the best rider under 14 years of age.¹⁰² As president of this non-profit organization, he continued the tradition of donating the money received from the show to many of Blowing Rock's good causes, such



Luther Snyder with Mrs. Joseph Cannon (left), Mrs. James Coker and Lloyd Tate

as the Red Cross, Boy Scouts, and Community Club.¹⁰³ Snyder also supervised the building of the Blowing Rock Country Club, saving thousands of dollars on building costs. He was the Club's first president.¹⁰⁴

In Charlotte, Snyder served as president of the Chamber of Commerce "during some of the darkest days of the depression" and was a board member for both the YMCA and Salvation Army.¹⁰⁵ He was director of the Merchants and Farmers National Bank in Charlotte, president of the Cannon Airport Board, and Board Chairman of the Pyramid Life Insurance Company of Charlotte.¹⁰⁶ He was a member and life steward of Myers Park Methodist Church, where a Bible class still exists in his honor.¹⁰⁷

Early in his career, Mr. Snyder invested in many local enterprises which "bolstered the economical life of the community and promoted pay rolls." ¹⁰⁸ He often said, "this policy has been a good one, because those things that help a community help everyone in that community." ¹⁰⁹

His death was a great loss, not only to his family, but to everyone who knew him. His contributions and achievements will long be remembered. It is fitting that such a majestic estate belonged to such a distinguished citizen.

Daingerfield

Of the artists who found solitude, guidance, and divine inspiration in the tiny picturesque village of Blowing Rock, the most famous was Elliott Daingerfield. His ecclesiastical and landscape paintings hang in many of the great museums in this country, including the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the National Gallery in Washington.¹¹⁰

Elliott Daingerfield was born in Harpers Ferry, Virginia, on March 26, 1859.¹¹¹ He was a descendant of an English family who came to Virginia early in the 17th Century, the son of Captain John Elliott Parker Daingerfield and Mathilda Wickham De Brua Daingerfield.¹¹² He became a citizen of North Carolina during the Civil War when his father was transferred, by General Robert E. Lee, to command the arsenal located in Fayetteville.¹¹³ He and his family lived in the Sanford House, where Lafayette visited in 1825.¹¹⁴ Young Elliott began his career as a painter one Christmas when his older brother, Archie, gave him a box of watercolors.¹¹⁵ One of his first paintings was completed at the age of twelve. Entitled "Girl With a Rabbit," the picture was pronounced "quite perceptive" for one so young.¹¹⁶

Determined to learn all he could about art, Elliott studied with a local photographer and with Mrs. William MacKay, a painter, specializing in the Chinese style.¹¹⁷ He soon realized that if he was to learn to be a painter, he would have to leave Fayetteville. To receive further experience and instruction, he worked with an unknown artist for six months in Norfolk, Virginia.¹¹⁸

Elliott was a child in the south during the Civil War and grew up during the Reconstruction Period. He was proud of his heritage, and knew that if he were to ever capture the south on canvas, he would have to leave in order to view his childhood and his home more objectively.¹¹⁹ So, at the age of 21, with only a few dollars to his name, he headed for New York City.¹²⁰ In order to support himself, he took a job painting Christmas cards and lamp shades, but soon found that he was not suited for this type of employment.¹²¹ Within a month, he became an apprentice to Walter Satterlee, a reputable artist and member of the National Academy of Design. Elliott was responsible for setting out paints and canvases and cleaning up the studio after Mr. Satterlee's classes. In return for his services, Elliott received instruction and criticism from his employer and was allowed to paint every morning before the first class.¹²² It wasn't long before he graduated from studio boy to instructor.¹²³

Elliott Daingerfield's talent was obvious. Within a year of arriving in New York, not only did he rise to "instructor" in a very well-known artist's studio, but he sold his first picture, "The Monk Smelling a Bottle of Wine" for \$150.124 In 1884, he left the studio and became friends with Mr. George Inness, the famous American landscape painter. Meeting this gentleman was a turning point in Elliott's career. Recognizing the young artist's talent, Mr. Inness would tell art connoisseurs who came to purchase a picture from him, "There is a young man up the street painting better than me. Go buy a picture from him." The two remained friends until Mr. Inness' death in 1894.125

In 1884, Elliott married Roberta Strange French, a daughter of Judge Robert Strange French of Wilmington, North Carolina. He brought his new bride to New York. The following winter, he became very ill with diphtheria, nearly dying from this dreaded disease. On orders from his doctor, he went to Blowing Rock to recuperate. Here a struggling artist could find room and board for \$15 a month. The journey up the mountain in a stage coach was long and hard, but apparently well worth it. According to Mr. Daingerfield, "I pulled aside the calico curtains and

wonder of wonders. It seemed like heaven itself!"¹²⁹ Years later he was to write, "The scene of my greatest inspiration has been in the mountains of North Carolina."¹³⁰

Daingerfield would continue to travel to Blowing Rock each summer for the next 50 years, building three homes in his beloved mountains and teaching young, promising artists from the surrounding area.

In 1891, Mr. Daingerfield relocated his New York studio and home to the Holbein Studios of West Fifty-fifth Street. The studio was also home to several important artists of the late 19th Century. Because the Holbein Studios functioned much like the European galleries, Daingerfield could now show his work at teas, receptions and open houses.¹³¹ He was slowly becoming known in the New York art world.

This same year, 1891, Daingerfield experienced unsurpassed joy when his wife became pregnant with their first child. The happiness was not to last. Both his wife and child died during childbirth. Stricken with grief, Daingerfield plunged into his work and in 1892 exhibited a painting entitled "The Mothers." 132

Three years later, in 1895, while vacationing at the Watauga Hotel in Blowing Rock, Mr. Elliott Daingerfield met and fell in love with Miss Anna Grainger of Louisville, Kentucky, the daughter of Leander Kaye Grainger.¹³³ Anna was "a titian beauty" with a "madonna-like face." To Elliott, meeting her was "like having a painting incarnated." Years later, one of his two daughters asked if it were merely physical attraction that brought them together. Daingerfield replied, "physical attraction, nothing! It was one spirit recognizing another and knowing it instantly."

Anna Grainger was to become her husband's inspiration. Shortly after their marriage in 1896, Elliott painted a picture entitled "Madonna and Child." The picture sold for \$1,000 to Mr. Haley Fiske, president of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and was the first of his paintings to be completed in Blowing Rock. The painting was printed on the cover of the December issue of *The Churchman*. Copies of the picture were made and distributed throughout the United States. As a result of the success of this picture, Elliott Daingerfield became well-known and respected as a religious painter. He was to paint other pictures in the same manner: "The Child of Mary," "The Holy Family," and "The Story of Madonna," which won the prestigious Clark Prize in 1902.¹³⁷

Daingerfield was a deeply religious man and had a "sincere desire to inspire his public by faithfully illustrating the Gospels." He once wrote that for him "art is the principle flowing out of God through certain men and women, by which they perceive and understand the beautiful. Sculpture, architecture, pictures, and music are the languages of the spirit." Each day before beginning to paint, he knelt down in front of a large crucifix hanging in his studio and prayed. ¹⁴⁰

In 1902, he began painting a series of murals for the Chapel of Saint Mary the Virgin in New York City. Once again, Anna Daingerfield provided his inspiration and was the model for the painting of Saint Ann. 141

During the early 1900s, Elliott was very happy and very satisfied with his personal life. Anna gave birth to two daughters, Marjorie and Gwendolyn, and the young artist felt complete; he had everything he wanted. His paintings and drawings during this period reflect his personal happiness.¹⁴²

In 1900, the Daingerfields completed "Windwood," their second summer home in Blowing Rock. Located on Morningside Drive, the home and gardens were depicted in several of Mr. Daingerfield's paintings, most notably in "High Noon" and the "Grape Arbor." The first home built by Daingerfield is located on Main Street across from St. Mary's of the Hills Episcopal Church and is now known by local residents as the "Edgewood Cottage." The artist's very first Blowing Rock studio was in the yard at this home. In later years, Mr. Pfister, another famous artist, noted for his landscape paintings and head of the art department at Rollins College at the time, occupied this home.

In 1911, Daingerfield was commissioned by the Santa Fe Railway to paint scenes of the west, including the Grand Canyon. The prictures he painted there were to be used for publicity, to entice tourists to travel by rail to see the west. An interesting story relates that years ago, in Kentucky, a blind fortune teller by the name of Jenny told young Anna Grainger that she would meet and "marry an artist who will become famous for painting two places. One will be a huge rock in the south and the other a big red hole in the west." The rock was Blowing Rock, for Mr. Daingerfield painted many lovely scenes of the area, and the red hole was the Grand Canyon. With this commission, Blind Jenny's prophecy was at last fulfilled. In the west are the south and the other and the red hole was the Grand Canyon.

As was his family, friends were very important to Elliott Daingerfield. He was often known to wonder aloud, "What



Anna Grainger Daingerfield with daughters Marjorie and Gwendolyn on the steps of "Windwood".

would one do without friends?" Generous and unselfish, Daingerfield was always willing to do for others and when his good friend William Stringfellow asked him to execute a painting for the new Blowing Rock Episcopal Church, which at the time was under construction, he promptly began to work on what was to become a masterpiece.¹⁴⁸

In 1918, before the new Church was completed, he finished his special creation and entitled it "Madonna of the Hills." The painting illustrates a legend which states that "on the morning of the summer soltice, the Lady Mary walks across the hills at dawn. If her coming is in light, the fields will be blessed with a rich harvest; if in shadow, then the year will be full of sadness and want." The Madonna portrayed in the painting:

"comes in brightness out of the radiance of a great white cloud touched with the gold of the coming sun.

One arm clasps a smiling Babe, the other hand holds a white lily of purity. The changing blues of the hillside over which the Madonna seems to walk is fairly vibrant with the gladness of The Summer Dawn, and one of the shades of blue matches exactly her robe. Life and light, like a miracle of beauty, follow her coming. Rhododendron bursts into waxy showers of color beside her, while all the flowers of the fields smile at her feet. It is truly the 'Madonna of the Hills' of legend who walks the blue hills each year on the first day of summer — the summer of seed and growth, bloom and blossom." ¹⁵¹

Adding to the legend, some say that if a scarf of clouds is wrpped tightly around the Madonna's neck, the county will have 40 days of rain, but if the scarf is wrapped loosely, there will be good weather and plenty of sunshine.¹⁵² Distinct features of Mr. Daingerfield's wife and daughters are reflected in the painting and the flowers around Saint Mary are all native to this area. One look at the picture reveals that the setting is purely local.¹⁵³ Mr. Daingerfield was intrigued with the legend of "The Madonna of the Hills," but no one seems to know its origin. When asked where he got the idea for this picture, Daingerfield once replied, "On my knees." ¹⁵⁴

In honor of Elliott Daingerfield and his gift, the Susie P. Stringfellow Memorial Church was named St. Mary's of the Hills. Today, thousands stop by the Church each year to view the painting and are captivated by the way in which it portrays the beauty of the Blowing Rock area. Today

No one is certain where Elliott Daingerfield was living in Blowing Rock while painting the picture. Some say he was living at "Windwood" on Morningside Drive; others insist that the painting was done in his studio at "Westglow," which was completed in 1917. A gentleman in Blowing Rock remembers as a child visiting Daingerfield at "Windwood,"

to watch as the painting gradually unfolded.¹⁵⁷ However, another resident writes, "The mountains forming the background for the painting are nothing short of a reproduced view of the scene from the front terrace of his home." The home the writer is referring to is "Westglow." Assuming Daingerfield began painting "The Madonna of the Hills" in 1916, it may be that the painting was conceived at 'Windwood' and completed at "Westglow."

In 1916, Daingerfield and his family began building "Westglow," a beautiful, white colonial mansion that overlooks the Blue Ridge, with a particularly spectacular view of Grandfather Mountain. The home is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The home was named for the Blue Ridge Mountain sunsets which Elliott described



Daingerfield's masterpiece "Madonna Of The Hills" in St. Mary's Of The Hills Episcopal Church

as "never glaring, always glowing through shadows, clouds, or mists." Daingerfield's studio was located in the yard. "Westglow" had eight bedrooms, five baths, a kitchen, dining room, library, and parlor. When owned by the Daingerfields, the home was filled with paintings done by the great artist. In the art-filled entrance hall were busts of Elliott and Anna Daingerfield, sculpted by Marjorie, the elder daughter. Other treasures in the home included twelve Chippendale chairs, an original Governor Winthrop desk, and a statue from Roman antiquity. Daingerfield's passion for oriental rugs was also reflected throughout his home. The two-story Grecian columns that stand so majestically in front of the home were imported from Italy. They were floated by river barge and hauled up the mountain by oxen. The stairwell and banister, leading to the second floor of the mansion, were designed by a French architect.

"Westglow" had its own 32-volt light plant but no other form of electricity. Iceboxes were used to store perishables and the many fireplaces provided heat. These were specially designed with narrow throats for the Daingerfield girls, who loved to lounge in front of huge, roaring fires. The home was completed in 1917 by architect and contractor J. Lee Hayes for a reputed cost of \$20,000. The house was supposedly designed after a home Daingerfield once visited as a child.

"Westglow" under construction

On the Estate was a caretaker's home. The caretaker and his family were allowed to farm and, in fact, raised most of the vegetables for the Daingerfield

family, but "Westglow" was never considered a true working Estate. Both of the Daingerfield girls loved to ride horses and were accomplished equestrians. Marjorie was honored as outstanding performer in the 1923 Blowing Rock Horse Show.

Each summer at "Westglow" Anna Daingerfield would host an elaborate reception for visitors from New York and friends from the Village. On the day of the reception, boxes of cakes and sandwiches would arrive from a caterer in Louisville, Kentucky. Marjorie Daingerfield recalls, in her reminiscence of Blowing Rock, a humorous incident that occurred the day after one of these receptions.

"Some very important and dignified New York friends, who were on a motor trip, came by to see us. We had tea for them of course. No one ever had anything stronger than tea at that time and Daddy remembered we had some macaroons left over from the party so he asked our very raw, new housemaid to bring some in. She rolled her eyes at us and scurried to the kitchen, returning in triumph with a glass filled with long, cold macaroni, which she passed with a flourish to all of the guests. Nobody accepted."¹⁷²

During the winter, Elliott Daingerfield taught at the Philadelphia School of Design. In the summer, several of his students would travel to Blowing Rock to continue their lessons with the famous artist. Some rented cottages in the area; others bought land and built summer homes. The mountain people called these female pupils "paintin' ladies" and, once they arrived, "there wasn't a rock near Blowing Rock that didn't have a smear of Persian Blue." In an autobiographical sketch, Daingerfield states that many of the women in these classes at Blowing Rock achieved fame in America as painters and names of several pupils appear in the catalogs of leading exhibitions and private galleries. In the catalogs of leading exhibitions and private galleries.

"Westglow" was indeed a popular place because of the friendliness and generosity of its residents. During the summer, there was a gathering of friends and neighbors almost every night. Activities ranged from charades to watermelon cuttings.¹⁷⁵

Among his other contributions, Daingerfield is credited with naming the area now known as Mayview. One summer, while out searching for new scenes to paint, Elliott discovered a wonderful rock with a spectacular view. He planned a picnic the very night of his discovery in honor of his sister-in-law, May French, who was visiting from Wilmington. In the words of his daughter, "When the guests struggled out on that rock — there it was covered with a cloth. They whipped off the cloth and broke a bottle and Daddy named it Mayview, after his sister-in-law, May." 176

In 1924, Mr. Daingerfield toured Europe for the second time to paint the lovely Venetian scenes of which he was so

fond. Soon after his return to the States, he suffered a severe embolism from which he never recovered.¹⁷⁷ He died in 1932, at the age of 73, from a heart attack, the same year as his good friend and companion, William Stringfellow.¹⁷⁸ The following summer, a memorial service for these two distinguished citizens was held at St. Mary's of the Hills.¹⁷⁹



Elliott Daingerfield poses with a group of admiring students.

Elliott Daingerfield was survived by his widow and two daughters, Marjorie and Gwendolyn. Anna Daingerfield died seven years after her beloved husband, and is buried at his side in Cross Creek Cemetery in Fayetteville.¹⁸⁰

Gwendolyn, the younger of the two children, was born on March 22, 1904. She attended Miss Veltin's School in New York City and Stuart Hall in Staunton, Virginia. She accompanied her family on two European tours which, under the tutelage of her father, broadened her education and enhanced her knowledge and appreciation of the arts, especially painting and sculpture. She was to develop the talent and technique to become a gifted artist in her own right but she chose to devote her energy to caring for her parents and later rearing her own children. Together with her sister, Marjorie, Gwendolyn enjoyed an active and interesting social life in New York and Blowing Rock. In later years, she would delight her younger friends by recalling the annual move from New York to Blowing Rock, traveling by railway, changing to carriages and wagons for the arduous climb

to 'The Rock,' accompanied by mountains of luggage, baggage, and food supplies for the summer stay.

Gwen, as she was affectionately known to her friends of all ages, was a vivid, warm and energetic person. These qualities, together with her quick-silver humor, contributed to her influence in church and in community affairs. Her hospitality became legendary in Blowing Rock. Every summer she and her older sister, Marjorie, gave a big julep party on the front porch of "Westglow" which was "always looked forward to and enjoyed by a great host of friends." Her favorite pastime was bridge and each week she would host a bridge party and contract tournament at "Westglow."¹⁸¹

Marjorie Jay Daingerfield was an "indomitable, red-haired woman noted for her nerve, style, sensitivity, and good humor." She was recognized nationally as an artist, author, and teacher, and even won local recognition as a fortune teller and master of the Ouija Board! Board!

Marjorie studied at Miss Veltin's School in New York City, the School of American Sculpture, and the Grand Central School of Art. She taught at Charlotte's Mint Museum, Duke University, the School of American Sculpture, the Grand Central School of Art, and was for two years head of the Department of Sculpture at Rollins College. She won numerous awards including the Huntington Award for her statue of Martha Graham and the Silver Medal Award for "Appassionate," a sculptured head in carrasa marble. She

An interesting story relates how Miss Daingerfield came up with the idea for this piece. Apparently, one evening in New York City, she was approached by a female prostitute asking for money. Marjorie was intrigued by the woman's face. It "seemed to personify the accumulation of all the evils and sins of womankind since Jezebel." Miss Daingerfield offered to pay this lady if she would sit as a model. The lady agreed and thus "Appasionate" was completed. The piece was shown in the National Gallery Exhibition in 1934 and was exhibited at the very first Blowing Rock Art Show, which was held at the Green Park Hotel in 1935. The art show was the result of "several distinguished artists passing the summer in Blowing Rock." 188

In 1952, Marjorie designed and cast the small silver figure of Sir Walter Raleigh which adorns the top of the Sir Walter Raleigh Cup. A replica of this figure was presented by North Carolina to Queen Elizabeth II during Her Majesty's official visit to the United States. In appreciation for the gift, Marjorie received a personal letter of gratitude

from Her Majesty. The North Carolina Literary and Historical Association awards replicas of the Raleigh figure annually. The original figure is located in Raleigh at the North Carolina Museum of History. 189 In 1954, Marjorie entered and won the international competition to design an emblem for the Girl Scouts of America. The emblem she designed was a sculptured figure representing, to her, the "ideal" girl scout.190

As their father had done before them, both of the Daingerfield "girls" (as they were fondly called by local residents) did much to help stimulate interest in art. Both were patrons of the first Blowing Rock Art Show and served on the Committee of Patronesses.¹⁹¹ The Blowing Rock Art Association was formed in 1950, "to serve as a focal point for broadening the cultural facilities in the community, to enlist the cooperation of the community and to plan for future activities such as exhibitions." The first annual exhibition of the Association opened in August 1950 and included exhibits from both Daingerfield girls. 192 Marjorie served as president for several of the Association's early years and both women devoted time and energy to insure its success. The first annual Blowing Rock Art Association State Exhibit opened in 1958 under the guidance of Marjorie, who was president at the time.¹⁹³

Marjorie executed several pieces of sculpture for prominent summer residents of Blowing Rock. One of her first pieces was a marble bust of Mrs. W. C. Allison. She also was commissioned to sculpt a marble bust of Anne Cannon Forsyth.¹⁹⁴ She painted a portrait of the late merchant and philanthropist, David Ovens, which hangs in Ovens Auditorium in Charlotte.¹⁹⁵

In 1939, Marjorie was listed in American Women, a biographical dictionary of outstanding women in the United States. 196

One of her most outstanding works, a bronze Madonna and Child entitled "The Offering," now stands in the lovely garden of St. Mary's of the Hills Episcopal Church in Blowing Rock, a gift from Marjorie to the community.¹⁹⁷

Like her father, Marjorie was a member of several national organizations, including the National Sculpture Society, the Pen and



Marjorie Daingerfield

Brush, and the Catherine Loppilod Wolfe Art Club. 198 She also enjoyed writing and had one book published, The Fun and Fundamentals of Sculpture. In this book, she tells an amusing story about how her work was perceived by the local residents.

I have a home and studio in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, forty miles from a railroad. I had a mountaineer named Hank for a caretaker who took a very dim view of my sculpture. He didn't see 'no sense' to me 'a-doin them there statues no way.' I had modelled the two grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cannon of Concord, full length and life size, and I was faced with a transportation problem. Hank asked, 'Miss Marjorie, how are you a-aimin' to get that there back to New York?' 'Well, Hank,' I replied, 'I'll send to Charlotte and get two hundred fifty pounds of plaster and make a thick mold over it and take it north in my car!' He was very dubious about the whole thing, and when I did have the statue covered with a thick mold and braced with irons so that it looked like an igloo with pipes sticking out of it, he said, 'That there h'aint a-goin' to get in no car. Hit'll weigh four hundred seventy five pounds.' 'Hank,' I said, 'that big Packard ought to carry four hundred seventy pounds on the back seat. Call in the neighbors.'

'So the farmers round about gathered and dwelt on the problem, spitting tobacco juice in all directions. Finally, they took two doors of the car off the hinges, took out the back seat, wormed my mold into the rear, where it was leveled off like everything else in N. C. and I set sail down the mountain. Of course, I couldn't see out my rear window! Some miles down the road I stopped at a filling station to get some gasoline. There another mountaineer let the gas run all over the road because he was so fascinated with what I had in the car. Finally, he came up to me and said, 'Lady, I h'aint one to go a-stickin' my nose into something that just plumb h'aint my business, but I must know what that that is you got in your automobile. Is it a heating system?'

'Well,' I said, 'I hadn't thought of it in that way before, but now that you mention it, yes, that's just what it is — it keeps the homefires burning!'199

The Moses H. Cone Estate

Moses H. Cone was the eldest of thirteen children born in 1857 to Herman and Helen Guggenheimer Cone in Jonesboro, Tennessee. The patriarch, Herman, was a Bavarian immigrant who had come to America at the age of 17, finally settling in Tennessee to become a successful dry goods merchant. In 1871 Moses' father moved his growing family to Baltimore, Maryland, where he established a wholesale grocery concern. Moses and his younger brother, Ceasar, became travelling salesmen for the family business, representing it throughout the south. It was on one of these journeys that the young Moses first encountered the mesmerizing beauty of Blowing Rock and vowed that he would someday return there to live.

Throughout their travels in the south, the ambitious brothers realized that great opportunities existed in the growing textile industry. With tenacity and creative initiative, Moses and his brother became the kingpins of cotton manufacturing in the south. It was a far cry from their humble beginnings as "drummers," travelling the area on horseback, soliciting orders for dish pans and cabbage graters.

Well-respected and well-liked, Moses had an extraordinary ability to sell. The textile empire, which eventually became known as Cone Mills, was a direct by-product of this natural talent plus hard work.

Moses Cone was a young man of 36 when he began to buy land north of Blowing Rock. Seeking relief from poor health and hoping again to experience the beauty and serenity of the mountains he had first enjoyed as a youth, he planned to fulfill a boyhood dream: he wanted to construct and supervise an estate of his own design, one which would be a model of self-sufficiency and natural beauty. The 3,516 acres which comprise the existing Moses Cone Estate were acquired by Moses and his wife, Bertha, over a period of 35 years. However, the vast majority of the acreage was purchased during a seven year period, 1893-1899.²⁰⁰

Located principally in Blowing Rock Township, the Estate included Flat Top Mountain, neighboring Rich Mountain, approximately 500 acres of rolling farmland, and significant patches of virgin hardwoods and evergreens. Throughout the acreage, native rhododendron and mountain laurel were abundant and from the high meadows one could witness the spectacular vista of nearby Grandfather Mountain.

The first acquisition was the expansive Joseph C. Norwood tract, followed in 1896 by the adjacent Joseph B.



Moses H. Cone

Clarke property. The following year was noteworthy as Moses and Bertha added eight more separate tracts of land to the growing estate. These included the large William A. Lenoir tract and the equally sizable Maye B. Martin property. Shortly thereafter seven more deeds exchanged hands.²⁰¹

It was in 1899 that Moses bought the Jefferson Brown farm, a very significant purchase. In the same year, the Cones began construction of their magnificent Manor House on this property.

Oxen were used to haul lumber some 20 winding mountainous miles from the railroad head at Lenoir, and tenants living on the estate were hired to help with the project.²⁰²

The Victorian, neocolonial home included 20 rooms with four complete floors. A majestic white, gabled and with Tiffany windows, the Manor House represented a significant contribution to the architecture of the Southern Highlands at the turn-of-the-century.

The Cones were environmentalists before the term became fashionable,

working hard to preserve and enrich their land. Three lakes were constructed on the Estate and with the advice of their friend, Gifford Pinchot, Governor of Pennysylvania and noted conservationist, they planted extensive white pine forests and hemlock hedges. Whitetail deer were imported from Pennsylvania and released to roam inside the Estate.²⁰³

Consistent with Moses' goal of self-sufficiency, sheep, hogs, and chickens were raised on the Estate, as well as milk cows. As a matter-of-fact, the cows produced enough milk so that some could be sold commercially. This led to the establishment of the first "Grade A" dairy in Watauga County.²⁰⁴

The Cone Estate became a major force in the economic well-being of the Blowing Rock Community. The Estate employed and/or supported 30 families. This, according to the census of 1900, means approximately 15-20% of Blowing Rock Township was supported by the Estate.



Flat Top Manor

That portion of the Estate which required the largest labor force was the extensive apple orchards. This was a benevolent attempt by Moses Cone to establish an alternative economy for area farmers, who prior to this were solely dependent on subsistence agriculture.

The orchards consisted of approximately 300 acres, distributed over three separate locations. Sawmill Orchard, the area just south of the Manor House, included the largest apple barn, where most of the business of the orchards was transacted. In a portion of Blowing Rock now owned by the Country Club, was another small section of apples. By far the largest orchard, however, was the China Orchard (so named because it was "on the other side of the world"), located just south of Highway 221 and its intersection with the Blue Ridge Parkway. All told, there were an estimated 10,000 apple trees on the Estate, of approximately twenty varieties.

At their peak of operation, these orchards provided at least seasonal employment for everyone from the tenants' children to the full-time supervisors on the Estate. While the apple orchards are no longer productive, they represented a bold experiment in the economic history of Blowing Rock and Watauga County.²⁰⁵

Moses and Bertha Cone entertained a wide array of influential guests at Flat Top Manor, including the Secretary of the Navy under President Wilson, Josephus Daniels, the Governor of North Carolina, and the President of the Southern Railroad Company. Also, while the couple had no children of their own, they often entertained tenant children from the Estate and the community-at-large, serving home-churned ice cream. Peach was a reputed favorite.

Moses Cone died prematurely at the age of 51 on December 8, 1908. After her husband's death, Bertha Cone guided the operation of the Estate efficiently and skillfully, dedicated to running it in a manner consistent with her late husband's aspirations. For 39 years Mrs. Cone lived as a widow-in-mourning, succumbing in 1947 at the age of 89.²⁰⁶

Moses Cone died intestate. A rather complicated settlement of the Estate and his various other holdings was arranged through the courts in 1911, to the satisfaction of Mrs. Cone and the Cone family.

By an indenture executed on May 30, 1911, Bertha Lindau Cone, widow of Moses H. Cone, conveyed 3,516 acres, known as the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park, to the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro, North Carolina. Under the terms of the indenture, she was to have the property for her personal use as long as she lived; and at her death the transfer of the property holdings would take place.²⁰⁷ As trustee, the Hospital was to manage the land in accordance with the terms and conditions of the trust. Any violation of the conditions would constitute a forfeiture of the lands and ownership would revert to the heirs of Moses H. Cone.

It was further stipulated that the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park was to be maintained as a recreational facility for the public. To assure this, the hospital would be charged with providing \$10,000 annually for maintenance on the Estate.

Following the death of Mrs. Cone in 1947, trustees of the Hospital concluded that it would not be in the best interest



A segment of the beautiful carriage trails on the estate

of the Hospital to own and operate a public park. It was obvious that such a park would be a severe and continuing drain on Hospital resources. The \$10,000 annual fund would not begin to cover maintenance expenses.²⁰⁸

In order to divest itself of the property and still conform to the terms of the 1911 indenture, the hospital trustees obtained a declaratory judgment from the North Carolina Supreme Court by which the Blowing Rock Estate was to be given to the United States of America to become a part of the National Park System. The National Park Service would develop and maintain the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park as a recreational area and public park in accordance with the terms and conditions of the original trust indenture of May 30, 1911. This conveyance was effective on January 21, 1949.

On March 21, 1949, John A. Wrug, Secretary of the Interior, accepted the indenture dated the 21st day of January, 1949, from the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital to the United States of America.²⁰⁹

Julian Price

Julian Price Memorial Park. The name brings to mind not only the 4,200 acres of forest, lake, streams, and meadows located just outside Blowing Rock, but the man for whom the park is named, the man who was indeed a friend to the people of Blowing Rock. Most remember him as the President of Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, but this was only one of his many and diverse roles. All remember Julian Price as a great builder, and a leader in the construction of the New South.

Price was born near Richmond, Virginia, on November 25, 1867. He was one of six children, the son of Joseph J. and Margaret Hill Price.²¹⁰ Growing up on a farm during the post-bellum years, young Julian learned early to take pride in hard work. Even as a toddler, Julian had chores and responsibilities and was never idle.²¹¹ As a result, he had little tolerance for laziness. Years later, when he was President of Jefferson Standard, he stood by his policy never to hire someone he considered to be "lazy." In his own words, "A lazy man! A crook, now, has energy. He does things and sometimes you can get the best of him and get something good out of him. Occasionally you can reform a crook and a reformed crook is a good worker. But a lazy man,—every day you keep him, you're throwing your money away."²¹²

After working as a telegraph operator and dispatcher for Southern Railroad and later as a salesman for American Tobacco Company, Price became an agent for the newly formed Greensboro Life Insurance Company. He invested savings of \$250 and borrowed \$1,000 to purchase shares in this new company.²¹³

The demand for insurance was almost nonexistent and initially he had difficulty convincing customers of its benefits. It wasn't long, however, before he was promoted to general agent and in 1907 he was made secretary and general manager.²¹⁴ In 1912, the Greensboro Life Insurance Company, Security Life Annuity of Greensboro, and Jefferson Standard of Raleigh merged to form one company, Jefferson Standard.²¹⁵ Julian Price became agency manager of this new Greensboro company and in 1914 became Vice-President. Two years later, he was elected President, a position held until January 28, 1946, when he stepped down and became Chairman of the Board.²¹⁶ Under his guidance,



Julian Price

Jefferson Standard grew to national prominence. As president, he increased the company's holdings by twenty-fold.²¹⁷ In 1930, Jefferson Standard gained control of the Pilot Life Insurance Company.²¹⁸

Jefferson Standard was only one of his many business interests. After WWI, he bought a major interest in the *Greensboro Record* and in 1930 funded the merger of the *Greensboro Record* and the *Greensboro Daily News*. He was also elected president of the Atlantic and Yadkin Railway in 1930 and served in that capacity until his death.²¹⁹

Julian Price had an adventuring, pioneer spirit and some say this is what first brought him to Blowing Rock.²²⁰ From the first time he saw this region of forest, lakes, streams, and meadows, he had a dream of sharing it with others. Captivated by the peace, tranquility, and beauty of these Blue Ridge Mountains, he envisioned a mountain retreat for Jefferson Standard employees, a retreat which would appeal to the camper, the hiker, and the fisherman, a retreat with a 300-acre lake, a campsite, and a large hotel.²²¹

In 1935, he purchased 1,600 acres of improved land from Hunter Manufacturing, a textile company which at one time considered building a plant in Blowing Rock. Times were not good for cotton mills and when Price heard that Hunter was going to be forced to sell, he wasted no time in acquiring the land.²²² Located near the Boone Fork River, just outside the town of Blowing Rock, the property has an interesting history.

The Boone Fork River, which runs through what is now Price Park, is named for Jesse Boone. Jesse, a nephew of the famous Daniel, was said to have built a cabin and farmed a small patch of land by this river which now bears his name. It is believed that he lived there from 1810-1817.²²³

The land was also hunted by the famous bear hunter, Harrison Aldrich (1821-1905). Ash Bear Pen Knob, at mile post 299 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, is just one of the many places where Aldrich built his pens and traps in the hopes of trapping bear.²²⁴

Traveling through Price Park today, one is in awe of the miles of forested wilderness. It's hard to believe that it has not always been this way. The area was harvested for its timber by the great lumber baron, William S. Whiting, during the years 1912-1930.²²⁵ Before Whiting came to the area, the land was covered with virgin timber, primarily chestnut, yellow poplar, and hemlock. In the words of the late Bull Sudderth, a local resident who once owned a portion of the property, the tall virgin forest was absolutely beautiful. "Beat anything you ever saw. It was the best boundary of timber in Carolina. I think Whiting cut thirty million feet there, maybe more. There were poplars six feet through. We were out fishing and saw one cut down there on Boone Fork. We figured it was a hundred feet to the first limb."²²⁶

When Julian Price began purchasing the land, it was labeled by the *Watauga Democrat* as "unimproved timberland." There was virtually nothing of the forest left. Today, the forest is beginning to replenish itself and, thanks to Julian Price and his dream, the timber may one day again grow to magnificent stature.

Leroy Wood was an ordained Methodist who became foreman of the Price Estate. He and his wife, Rosie, and two of their sons, Harold and Dale, moved into the "Sims Place." Hamp Sims (1871-1951) was quite a character. He believed in planning ahead and years before his death had a coffin built to his own specifications. He would often try the coffin out, boasting about it to his friends. He said that it was made from chestnut "so that he could go through hell a-poppin' and a-crackin." Sims Pond and Sims Creek, located in Price Park, derive their names from this colorful mountaineer.²²⁸

At one time, there were seven families living on the Estate, farming the land and raising "white-face" cattle, hogs, sheep, and burley tobacco. Five miles of streams stocked with trout were also maintained. Julian Price liked to

experiment and occasionally had the farmers try their hand at raising new and different crops.²²⁹ His Estate was said by many to "demonstrate the opportunity of southern agriculture, particularly in fine cattle."²³⁰

Most of the homes and other buildings that once stood on the Estate were torn down when the land was given to the National Park Service. However, three of the original buildings still stand: the red barn near the entrance to Price Park, right off the Parkway; the little three-room house down from the barn, now remodeled and functioning as a ranger residence; and a green house with white lattice on Shulls Mill Road which also serves as a residence for summer rangers.²³¹

Price intended to retire one day to his farm, for it was truly "the apple of his eye."²³² He had plans to build a large home there, but his dream was never realized. He and his wife did build a home in the town of Blowing Rock, but are not known ever to have lived there. The rock house still stands on the corner of Buxton Road and Main Street.²³³

Always the immaculate dresser and never without his hat or cane, Price was easily recognized in the Village.²³⁴ It became a family tradition to bring his wife and two children to Blowing Rock for the summer and to stay at Mayview Manor. His daughter Kathleen recalls, "my father thought the view from the porch of the Manor was unequaled anywhere in the world. Not even Switzerland (where the Prices visited) could touch it."²³⁵

As in the rest of the state, citizens of Blowing Rock were deeply saddened by the news of Julian Price's untimely death. On his way to Blowing Rock from Greensboro with two friends and his chauffeur, he was to check the progress on the construction of his 300-acre fishing lake. His car failed to make a slight curve just outside North Wilkesboro. A mechanical defect was the reason given for the cause of the accident. Price was killed instantly. No one else in the car was seriously injured.²³⁶

Julian Price wanted most to retain the natural beauty of the Estate and to protect it from overdevelopment. To ensure that their father's wishes were fulfilled, Kathleen and Ralph Price sold the Estate to Jefferson Standard for a nominal sum. It was donated to the federal government in 1952 to be used as a recreation area for all to enjoy.²³⁷ It is mere coincidence that, at the same time, relatives of Moses Cone were in the process of donating the magnificent Cone Estate. Reportedly, it was Benjamin Cone, Sr., Moses' nephew, who introduced Ralph Price to Sam Weems, then superintendent of the Blue Ridge Parkway, to discuss the possibility of donating the land. Because construction of the lake was Julian Price's favorite project on the Estate, the family wanted it completed in memory of their father. Rep. Robert (Farmer Bob) Doughton of Laurel Springs, promised that he would find money to finish the lake and he did.

Even better than he knew, Julian Price made a lasting contribution to posterity when he purchased this vast Estate. Anyone who has ever walked around the scenic lake, hiked the Boone Fork Trail, or just driven the Parkway



Beautiful Price Lake on the Blue Ridge Parkway

silently thanks Julian Price and his family for this gift of nature. The Julian Price Memorial Park, dedicated in the summer of 1960, serves as a fitting tribute to this prominent citizen.²³⁸

The Cannons

J. W. Cannon founded not only Cannon Mills, but established the town of Kannapolis. He laid out the streets, and built the mill, along with 1,200 homes for his employees.²³⁹ He first came to Blowing Rock in the early 1900s and built a home on Pinnacle Drive across from the Green Park Hotel. This large, white, two-story structure, with its front view of the famed Green Park Hotel and its back view overlooking Grandfather Mountain, Mount Mitchell, Table Rock, Clingman's Dome, Flat Top and the Great Smokies, has remained in the family ever since.²⁴⁰

Charles Cannon, born in 1892, was the youngest child of J.W. Cannon. He attended Fishburne Military Academy in

Waynesboro, Virginia, and enrolled in Davidson College but soon left to work for his father. In 1921, at the age of 29, he became president of Cannon Mills. "He took over a company with four plants and 6,700 workers and by the time he stepped up to Chairman of the Board in 1962, he had developed it into 12 mills in North and South Carolina with more than 20,000 workers..."²⁴¹

From the time he was a young boy, Charles Cannon spent his summers in Blowing Rock. He acquired the family home after the 1916 flood. His father offered to sell him the house saying that he "would never be able to live there again."

But the flood did not deter Charles Cannon. He purchased his father's home and began a tradition of bringing his wife, the former Ruth Coltrane, and four children, William Coltrane, Charles A. Jr., Mariam Winslow, and Mary Ruth, to Blowing Rock each summer, missing only those years during World War II. Charles was not the only child of J.W. Cannon to spend summers in Blowing Rock. The name Cannon, already synonymous with Kannapolis, soon became synonymous with Blowing Rock. At one point, all of J.W.'s children had summer homes in Blowing Rock. Half, including Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Cannon, lived in Mayview; the rest built homes in the Green Park area. This caused a bit of friendly sibling rivalry, for each believed that he lived in the most beautiful section of town.²⁴²

Biographers describe Charles Cannon as a strong and extremely relgious man. As *The Charlotte Observer* reported, "He was relatively small in stature, best described as 'peppery' in speech and action. When he wanted to end a conversation there was no mistaking his intent, but he could also be graciously captivating and warm in personal relationships and there was no doubt about his business acumen."²⁴³

He was also described as a benevolent despot, still living in the 19th Century, imposing 19th Century standards whenever possible.²⁴⁴ Charlotte author Harry Golden, in his book *You're Entitle*, said of Cannon, "He is the last of the feudal barons of the 20th century. Because of his vast holdings in the Cannon Mills, he owns the material town of Kannapolis in the same way that William Faulkner owns the imaginary town of Jefferson Yoknopatawpha."

Although in the early 1960s over 20,000 people worked in the Cannon Mills, Mr. Charlie, (a nickname given to him by many employees) claimed all of them as friends. According to Golden: "He knows who has been sick in the family, who has graduated from high school, and who has just married. Many of these work at the same looms their fathers worked. There is no doubt of Mr. Cannon's fellowship with his workers, but the company also relies on a tightly organized system of supervision which penetrates into the social, political, religious, and fraternal life of the community."²⁴⁶

Charles A. Cannon loved Blowing Rock, too. In the words of his daughter, Mariam Cannon Hayes (Mrs. Robert): "You know he loved it if he was brave enough to bring four young children up the mountain each summer!" The pilgrimage to Blowing Rock was less difficult than the days when J.W. made the trip by horse and wagon. On the morning of the scheduled trip, they rolled out of bed bright and early, climbed into the family car, and began the long day's journey. Around noon they stopped alongside the road for a picnic lunch. Late in the afternoon, when they saw the famed Green Park Hotel, the very first landmark at the top of the mountain, they knew they had arrived at their beloved summer home. Even though the trip was much easier than it had been in earlier days, it was not



The home of J.W. Cannon (left) on Pinnacle Drive in the early 1900's

without its trials. Mrs. Hayes recalls that in those days, cars were not as well-equipped to make the trip up the Lenoir Mountain. Each summer her Uncle Ross's car would overheat and boil over. The Cannon caravan would pull over and patiently wait until the car and driver were ready to give it another try.²⁴⁷

Like all summer residents, the Cannons took advantage of the fresh air and beautiful scenery. Mr. Cannon's favorite pastime was jeeping. He loved to travel on the old country roads, which took him to views which were, in his estimation, unsurpassed anywhere in the world. His favorite route was the old Globe Road.

The Cannon children also took advantage of the air and opportunity for exercise. A lady by the name of Annie Gilbert took care of the children during the long days of summer. Day after day, she and the children hiked the Lonesome Pine, the Gurney Ridge, and other trails surrounding Blowing Rock. They explored the countryside, hunting for mushrooms, investigating waterfalls and streams, feasting their eyes on the splendor of the area, all the while enjoying the cool mountain breeze. The mercantile stores, drugstores, and churches provided not only the necessities, but amusement and entertainment for the Cannons and other early summer residents. It was a treat to walk to town or to the post office at Green Park, just to see what others were up to. Picnics on Green Hill, before it became a community development, were also considered a "great outing." The highlight of the week, however, occurred on Friday afternoon. Every Friday, the children and Annie hiked down to Bailey's Camp to await the arrival of Mr. Cannon who was traveling from Concord for the weekend. When they saw his car coming over the ridge, they waved him down and hitched a ride back up the mountain.²⁴⁸

"Miss Ruth," as she was called by the community, and her four children stayed in Blowing Rock for the entire summer, but because it was necessary to keep operations running smoothly in Kannapolis, Mr. Cannon came to Blowing Rock only on the weekends. Like so many others, he eagerly anticipated the cool mist which encircled him upon reaching the top of the mountain. He gave strict orders to his family not to start a fire on Friday evenings until he had time to cool off!

Both Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cannon were active in various Blowing Rock organizations. Like other wealthy, prominent citizens, the family supported the community center for black residents. "Miss Ruth" was a member of the Community Club and maintained a strong interest in the library. Both she and her husband were on the Board of the Blowing Rock Horse Show, which at the time was a local, amateur, social event possessing few of the professional qualities which it has now.²⁴⁹ Residents in Green Park would compete against residents in Mayview for the coveted blue ribbon.²⁵⁰

In addition to exploring the old mountain roads, Charles enjoyed playing golf at the Blowing Rock Country Club, where he and his family were members.

Mr. Cannon's most important charity was the Edgar Tufts Memorial Association, where he served on the Board of Directors. At the time, the Association included Lees-McRae College, Grandfather Home for Children, and the hospital in Banner Elk. The Charles A. Cannon, Jr. Memorial Hospital is named for his son who was killed in World War II.²⁵¹

Mrs. Cannon was a grand hostess and entertained many famous and well-known leaders of the day. Dorothy Henkel Summerville recalls that "during these early years, Mrs. Charles Cannon (Miss Ruth) gave a large tea each summer. Friends gathered from far and wide. She always had a guest of honor. One year it was Mrs. Woodrow Wilson."²⁵² Other guests in the Cannon home included former North Carolina governors Broughton and Moore, Clyde Hewie, and Adlai Stevenson. In addition, Miss Ruth was on the Board of Directors of the Tryon Palace in New Bern and entertained many of the celebrities connected with the famed Palace at her summer home.²⁵³

For the youth of the community, the greatest social event of the season was the dance at



Mrs. Charles Cannon (left) with Governor Hoey and Ashland Cannon

Mayview Manor. Here is where many learned not only how to dance, but how to "court." Mrs. Hayes says she can still remember those dances in the big Mayview Ballroom with all the girls huddled in one corner and all the young men standing guard in the other. Although the Green Park Hotel was one of the leading resort hostelries of the south, Mariam Hayes remembers that when her family wanted to go somewhere for a special celebration, they

went to the more elaborate Mayview Manor.²⁵⁴

Mrs. Hayes also recalls that when she was growing up, the delivery boy from Craig's Store arrived first thing in the morning to take the day's order, returning in early afternoon with the requested items. This is a service which has apparently gone the way of the doctor's house call.

Like so many in Blowing Rock, the Cannon family has always maintained a special interest in the Grandfather Home for Children. Mariam and her husband, Robert, continued this interest when they began sponsoring the benefit concerts for the orphanage and the Blowing Rock Hospital after the death of David Ovens in 1957. Mrs. Hayes said that it was complicated getting four musical stars and their accompanists to Blowing Rock. The opera stars who entertained at these events stayed in the Hayes home for the weekend. A major advantage of hosting these stars, according to Mrs. Hayes, was that she and her husband always got to hear them practice. Sponsoring these events is remembered fondly by Mrs. Hayes. "It was a busy time, but a good time." On Saturday night, after the benefit concert in Banner Elk, which also contributed to the Edgar Tufts Memorial Association, the stars returned to the Hayes home for a midnight dinner, a full meal with all the trimmings.²⁵⁵

Greystone and the Mebanes

One of the most intriguing estates in Blowing Rock is "Greystone Towers." Built in 1922 for a reputed cost of \$250,000, Greystone was the summer home of Robert and Myra Mebane. The Mebanes had "money, prestige, and charm" and were social leaders in the Village during the '20s and early '30s. 257

Robert Mebane was a native of Greensboro and former president of the Republic Cotton Mills at Great Falls, South Carolina.²⁵⁸ At the time of his death in 1934, he was Secretary of the United States Chamber of Commerce.²⁵⁹

Robert Sloane Mebane was several years older than his wife, Myra, and had a grown son, Robert, from a previous marriage. Story has it that the younger Robert was once engaged to Myra. The engagement ended, however, when Robert brought his fiancee home to meet his father. The elder Mebane was captivated with Myra and while Robert was away in Europe, he persuaded her to marry him. They had one child, a daughter, whom everyone called "Randy." Eventually, Robert, Jr. fell in love again and married Frances Williamson, whose mother was a member of the Vardell family, early summer residents of Blowing Rock. 261

Myra Mebane was a multi-talented lady. She was known as a "crack riflewoman" having been instructed by the famous Annie Oakley at the Mayview Gun and Rod Club. She was among of the first women to hunt big game in Alaska.²⁶²

Myra's talents were such that after Mr. Mebane's death in 1934, she worked as an interior designer and landscape gardener. She decorated resorts and clubs from the eastern seaboard to the west coast and designed homes for many famous people, including the William Buckleys, the Jock Whitneys, the Raymond Firestones, and members of the DuPont family. But nowhere was her creative talent more evident than at "Greystone." According to Dorothy Henkel Summerville, who knew the Mebanes when they summered in Blowing Rock, "The beauty of the extensive grounds, a section of which was terraced, planted with colorful flowers and held with stone retaining walls, as well as the impeccable taste used in the interior, were strictly Myra."

In 1920, the Mebanes purchased 42 acres of land on the highest peak in Mayview Park, known as "Pinnacle Crest," from Walter Alexander. After a long search, Myra finally found an architect from Boston who was willing to design her dream home, a "German-gothic castle honeycombed with bathrooms. The castle provided work for local builders, contractors, and engineers. A winding gravel road beneath a labyrinth of trees led to the stone and bark structure. Its fortress front jutted and scowled off the cliff-edge towards Grandfather Mountain and the construction workers jokingly commented to one another; "Nough to wake ole' Gran'paw ain't it?" Myra Mebane stayed in Blowing Rock while the house was being built and she was not satisfied until every piece of furniture, every tapestry, and every drapery was in place. 167

Once the house was completed, the Mebanes hosted many opulent parties.²⁶⁸ Preparations often started weeks in advance. There were invitations to be mailed, gourmet foods to order, caterers to schedule, florists and musicians to contact, and new dresses to purchase. On the day before the party, movers were hired to remove the biggest pieces of furniture from the main living room to make space for dancing.²⁶⁹

On the evening of a grand event, visitors were greeted by vivacious Myra and led into a spacious entrance hall filled



"Greystone"

with 16th Century antiques.²⁷⁰ To the right of the entrance hall was a solarium where Mrs. Mebane entertained drop-in guests. Filled with magnificent, exotic plants, the solarium was one of the most captivating rooms in the house. It also afforded a beautiful panoramic view of the mountains.²⁷¹

The great living room, or "ballroom" as it was called by Mrs. Mebane, with its 39 foot vaulted ceiling, oak-pegged arch beams, and massive stone fireplace, was the center of entertainment.²⁷² French doors opened onto a stone terrace where cocktail parties were often held, and tall windows invited the mountain landscape inside. Amidst the tapestries and other wall ornaments hung mounted wild animal heads, many of which were Myra's victims.²⁷³ Three hundred yards of

beautiful, hand-jeweled, embroidered draperies from England adorned the windows and several Daingerfield paintings hung on the walls.²⁷⁴

The dining room was used not only for formal dinners, but for family gatherings as well. The dining room table was originally made for Sir Edward Kent in England. Myra Mebane often told guests that the twelve-foot table contained a piece of wood from every country in the world. Italian chairs of the period, each of a different height, were situated around the banquet table and an "elaborate, wrought-iron chandelier" was centered above. A portrait of Myra was located at one end of the room. Next to the dining room was a butler's pantry and the kitchen which had a big wood stove and range.²⁷⁵

The bedrooms and baths were on the second floor, accessed by a stairway. A balcony overlooking the ballroom separated the two wings on the second floor. The right wing, facing the house, contained two bedrooms. Another bedroom, with a beautiful view of the courtyard and gardens, was located between the two wings and opened onto the balcony. The left wing housed the master bedroom and bath, Mrs. Mebane's dressing room, which had a magnificent view of Grandfather Mountain, and Randy's bedroom and bath, which adjoined the bedroom of her French governess. Only the finest of fabrics and pure silk spreads were used in the bedrooms.²⁷⁶ All of the bathrooms were done in Italian tile and all had fancy pedestal lavatories.²⁷⁷

The turret, located on the third floor, served as the poker room. Only men were allowed. Robert played poker at very high stakes with well-known men of the era, including J. P. Duke and Governor Cameron Morrison. According to Dorothy Summerville, "In those days, money was plentiful for a great many people who felt it was to be enjoyed any way they wished." Because the stakes were so high, a bank vault was installed on the floor beneath the turret. The Mebane's silver services and china were also kept there. The turret had a stone fireplace and large picture windows which offered a magnificent 360 degree view of Grandfather and the surrounding mountains.²⁷⁸

Greystone was heated with steam from a coal-fired burner. Electricity came from the Mayview Lake generator plant. The Mebanes had two cooks, two housekeepers, two butlers, and a chauffeur. Separate quarters were located behind the main house for these employees.²⁷⁹

Indeed, the Mebanes were glamorous, extravagant, alluring, and fascinating. Theirs was certainly an epicurean lifestyle. According to one local resident, "they lived it up and lived it up well as long as the money held out."²⁸⁰ They were active participants in many of the social events in Blowing Rock. Myra was not an accomplished equestrienne but she often rode in the annual horse show on Green Hill. According to Dorothy Henkel Summerville, "she had a sorrel, five-gaited, high-stepping mare of sophisticated, show-horse quality. Her participation added glamour to any social occasion, including the horse show."²⁸¹

Robert enjoyed golf and often played on the course at Green Park. At a time when caddy fees were 50 to 75 cents, he gave the young men \$1.00 to \$2.00 a round and often a \$5 tip!²⁸²

The Mebanes gave the local residents a new version of how the super-rich lived. Robert brought one of the first cars to Blowing Rock. He eventually gave the car to Keever Hollars just to get it out of his way. The Mebanes also owned one of the first electric, self-playing baby grand pianos.²⁸³

The old saying that "he who has but one penny and spends two has no need for a purse," ultimately applied to the Mebanes. Their extravagant lifestyle took its toll. An article in the *Watauga Democrat* in 1928 indicated that Mr. Mebane was deeply in debt to the Hunter Manufacturing and Commission Company of Greensboro. Suit was filed against Mr. Mebane to recover the debt. He listed "Greystone" as one of his assets when, in fact, the Estate belonged to his wife and children.²⁸⁴ According to Mrs. Summerville, "the first indication that there was a problem was when Myra no longer wore a beautiful diamond bracelet that was part of her extensive jewelry collection."²⁸⁵ Precisely how the Mebane fortune was lost is unknown. Most speculate that it was the Depression. After Robert's death in 1934, all of Myra's jewelry was sold piece by piece.²⁸⁶ She did everything she could to hold on to Greystone. She took an apartment in town and rented out her Estate to select summer visitors. Local residents say this is where Julian Price stayed on his first visit to the area.²⁸⁷ Around 1937, Myra began serving Sunday evening dinners at Greystone. The number of guests allowed was limited and reservations were required. She also catered luncheons and teas. An advertisement in the *The Blowing Rocket* during this time read: "Let Myra Mebane at Greystone do your worrying! Luncheons-Teas-Dinners."²⁸⁸ In 1938, Greystone was opened to the public for the first time and tours were given at an admission price of 50 cents per person.²⁸⁹ In addition, she became the first manager of the Blowing Rock Country Club when it opened in 1941.

Mrs. Mebane managed to hold on to her Estate until 1948, when it was purchased by a Charlotte based holding company known as The American Corporation.²⁹⁰ The Corporation consisted of five members, with Mr. Thomas Shelton, a prominent banker and businessman, as president. The corporation spent approximately \$150,000 on repairing the house. The coal-fired burner was replaced with an oil-fire burner and the water lines were redone with copper. In an attempt to brighten the interior, bedrooms were painted in lavender and green.²⁹¹

To the local folks, Shelton was considered an eccentric. He kept to himself and liked to walk barefoot in the snow and ice. According to his son, he "displayed many of the eccentricities that can manifest themselves in a highly accomplished, strong-willed man."²⁹²

Shelton suffered from terminal cancer and did not want medical treatment. When the pain became unbearable, he took his own life on the front patio of Greystone. ²⁹³

The Broyhills

The Broyhill name is as familiar to the residents of Blowing Rock as is perhaps any other. Although Lenoir, the "gateway" to Blowing Rock, served as the family's city of primary residence, their roots sprang from the mountains and they have nurtured a distinct and steadfast relationship with this mountain heritage, maintaining summer homes and pursuing business and philanthropic endeavors here continuously throughout the years.

Isaac Broyhill was born on June 1, 1850, at Moravian Falls in Wilkes County. In 1876, he married a young woman seven years his junior, Miss Margaret Parsons, also a native of Wilkes County. A year later, she gave birth to their first child, Thomas Hamilton Broyhill, born April 2, 1877. After his birth, Isaac and Margaret moved from the Pores Knob section of Wilkes County to a farm near Boomer, at the foot of the Brushy Mountains, halfway between Lenoir and Wilkesboro. Although money was scarce, children were not. Thomas was followed by Gordon in 1879, John in 1881, William in 1885, Mary in 1886, Isaac Jefferson in 1889, James Edgar in 1894, and Myrtle in 1897.²⁹⁴

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, having so many children was not considered a financial liability, but an asset. More children meant more hands to help in the fields or in the kitchen. None of the Broyhill children were afraid of hard work. While their father worked in the mill grinding corn for the local farmers, the children were busy at home and on the farm. The boys also contributed to the family income by trapping rabbits and selling their skins. Later the family became involved in lumbering, logging, and blacksmithing. All eight children attended school in a one-room, one-teacher schoolhouse, receiving only a grade school education. The school was only open during the winter months. It closed in the spring so that the children could help with spring planting, opened for a month or two in August or September, and closed again in October during the harvesting season. 296

Thomas, as the eldest, was the first to leave home. He was a dreamer, destined for success. In the 1890s, he earned



Ed and Satie Broyhill

extra cash for the family by hauling lumber from the sawmill to the main road to be picked up and sent to the market.²⁹⁷ In 1900, he began operating his own sawmill, shipping the lumber to all parts of the United States, where it was used to build furniture and houses. As partial payment for cutting and hauling timber, the Kent Furniture and Coffin Company gave him four percent interest in their company.²⁹⁸ This was just enough to whet his appetite for the furniture industry. He eventually acquired his own timberlands in isolated sections of the county. When he had enough capital saved, he and Robert Steele, a friend and fellow businessman, purchased 120 shares of stock in the Kent Furniture and Coffin Company.²⁹⁹ With this purchase, he became the

largest stockholder in the company and changed the name to the Lenoir Furniture Company. Mr. T. H. Broyhill, as he was called by his employees, completely reorganized the company, putting it on the road to recovery and future success. He eventually bought out most of his partners and became the primary owner of the company. Tom's early efforts culminated in the Broyhill Industries of today.³⁰⁰

For 50 years, Thomas Broyhill was a much loved and respected figure in Lenoir. He worked hard to make his company successful and along the way acquired a considerable personal fortune.³⁰¹ He and his wife, the former Mae Powell, raised four children—Otis, Lillie, Ted, and Ethel. The children remember their father as being extremely energetic, industrious, happy, and humorous.³⁰²

In addition to the furniture industry, Tom Broyhill's other interest was real estate. According to people who remember him, he liked to buy, but he didn't like to sell. This reluctance, however, did not stop him from donating land for various civic causes and community betterment projects. Broyhill Park, located in Lenoir, is one example of his benevolence.³⁰³

Although it was Tom who first introduced the family to the furniture industry, it was his younger brother, Ed, who made Broyhill Industries one of the largest furniture companies in North Carolina as well as in the United States.³⁰⁴

When Tom purchased stock in the Kent Factory in 1912, he convinced Ed that "a man could reach out from the hill country of Wilkes County and find something better for himself." To his younger brother, "Tom Broyhill was a splendid success, a man of affluence whom people admired and respected."³⁰⁵ Ed decided that he too wanted to leave the farm in pursuit of other opportunities, but first he needed an education. In 1913, at the age of 21, he left his father's farm to attend the Appalachian Training School in Boone (now Appalachian State University).³⁰⁶

At this time, the Training School was a state-run boarding school, offering a high school diploma for both boys and girls. Tuition at the school was provided by the State of North Carolina, but the students were required to pay seven dollars a month room and board.³⁰⁷ The determined young man travelled thirty-five miles to the school, mostly on foot, arriving with the grand sum of five dollars in his pocket.³⁰⁸ He was receiving no financial help from his father so, in order to pay for the tuition, he opened his own barber shop in downtown Boone and charged fifteen cents for a haircut and ten cents for a shave. His career as a barber lasted only a few months, but this would not discourage him. He then set up shop on the lower floor of his dormitory and began pressing clothes for students and faculty.³⁰⁹ This enterprise was not extremely lucrative and at times he was forced to borrow from his older brother, Tom. Ed worked during the summers at various jobs, saving every penny so that he could return to school in the fall.³¹⁰

While working as a barber, Ed met a man named Hartley Hunt. Mr. Hunt mentioned that he had a daughter and was thinking of sending her to Appalachian. Ed said that he could not go wrong sending his daughter to such a respectable institution. In the fall of 1914, Satie Hunt arrived at the Training School. Shortly thereafter she met Ed Broyhill whom, interestingly enough, she would eventually marry.³¹¹

When she arrived at the Training School, she was only 15 years old. Her well-rounded education included Latin

grammar and verse, English, mathematics, piano, and voice. Having learned to read music almost before learning to read words, she was exceptionally talented in this area.³¹² In 1918, she left Appalachian to attend the North Carolina College for Women, now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.³¹³

Ed never received his high school diploma. In 1917, during his fifth and final year at the school, he was drafted.³¹⁴ After a stay at Camp Jackson in South Carolina for basic indoctrination, he was assigned to the 20th Engineers in Washington, D. C. He was never sent overseas, however, because he was diagnosed as tubercular. While he was recuperating at Walter Reed Hospital, he learned a skill which he would later say gained him entrance into the business world — he learned to type.³¹⁵ In 1918, Ed was discharged from the army. Before going home, he made a stop in Greensboro, at the North Carolina College for Women, determined to convince Satie to marry him.³¹⁶

In 1919, Ed went to work for his brother, at the Lenoir Furniture Company. Ed worked through the year and never received a paycheck. At the end of the year, however, Tom gave him a \$1,800 bonus for his performance. With \$600 he bought one share in his brother's company.³¹⁷

In 1921, seven years after they first met, Ed and Satie were married. They raised four children, Allene, Paul, James, and Bettie, all of whom possess the Broyhill drive and ambition, and sense of obligation toward the community. They grew up in the "typical small town manner, attending the public schools, building tree houses, digging caves, and playing cowboys." Ed Broyhill's role in the family was that of patriarch, but according to William Stevens, author of Ed Broyhill's biography, *Anvil of Adversity*, "his attitude goes far beyond the sense of responsibility to bring home the bacon or even the filet. It extends to providing a total environment in which those about him can prosper emotionally, fiscally, intellectually, and spiritually." J.E. Broyhill once said: "God forges us on an Anvil of Adversity for a purpose known only to Him. That is the way He prepares us for life." 321

By 1923, Ed was in charge of designing, pricing, and selling for the company, all for \$150 a month. On the weekends he sold insurance in order to save enough money to one day buy his own company. In 1926, he seized the opportunity to go into business for himself. After consulting with Tom, Ed mortgaged his own house for \$5,000 and founded the Lenoir Chair Company. According to Stevens, in those first months the Broyhill office, which today is equipped with electronic data-processing machines, computers and other sophisticated business devices, contained nothing but the simplest equipment and ran with an absolute minimum of fuss and red tape. It boasted little more than a desk for Broyhill plus a bookkeeping desk, a typing desk, a safe, a filing cabinet and an adding machine. Despite difficulties, the company slowly began to prosper. Even during the Depression, the company continued to grow. When the Lenoir banks were forced to close for several weeks, employees were paid with scrip, a substitute for money in the form of a promise to pay later. During the '30s, Tom and Ed acquired several manufacturing plants which had foundered because of the Depression.

In 1937, after several heart attacks, Tom decided to retire, giving the responsibility of running the plants to his younger brother, Ed. His success in business can be partially attributed to the good treatment of his employees. According to one employee, "No one had ever entered Ed Broyhill's employ who did not become better for it. He had a head for progress but a heart for his employees." Ed Broyhill was once quoted as saying, "Thousands of books have been written on how to manage people, but none is as good as the Bible." 325

Not only did the Broyhills play a major role in the history of the furniture industry in North Carolina, they also played a role in the history of Blowing Rock. As early as 1928, Tom Broyhill became part-owner of the famed Mayview Manor Resort. Mr. Broyhill accompanied his good friend, Mr. Charles Hayworth, to a public auction on the grounds of Mayview Park. When Hayworth made a bid on the palatial property, Tom Broyhill felt that his friend was getting in over his head and spontaneously uttered, "I'll take half-interest."

In 1930, Broyhill leased the Hotel to Mr. Milton M. Chapman of Volusia County, Florida, whose reputation as manager of some of the finest hotels in the world was unequalled. Mr. Chapman remained at the helm until the hotel closed in 1966.

It is interesting to note that in 1929, following the death of Mr. Hayworth, Broyhill wrote a letter to Mayor Grover Robbins saying "that he and Mrs. Hayworth of High Point would donate their property fronting on the (Mayview) Lake if the town would acquire the rest and develop it into a park." A committee was appointed by Mayor Robbins to work on plans for carrying out the suggestion, but for some reason the lake front was never developed.³²⁶

Tom Broyhill died on November 19, 1955. He had become the sole owner of Mayview in 1935 and his will stated that

the property was to be sold 10 years after his death. According to Chuck Ketchie, who conducted an extensive study of the Mayview Manor Estate, "Mrs. Mae P. Broyhill liquidated the entire Estate and distributed the monies in accordance with her husband's last will—she excluded only that portion which included her as beneficiary; and this portion she gave to her favorite charity." The largest portions of the Estate funds went to Wake Forest University, and to Mars Hill College including her beneficiary portion.³²⁷

In 1952, Ed, following in his older brother's footsteps, bought the Green Park Hotel. According to Stevens, "his purchase was motivated by the growth in attendance at the Southern Furniture Market and the dearth of accommodations for buyers." Under Ed's ownership, the Green Park Hotel was completely renovated and expanded and its popularity greatly increased.

Ed and Satie spent five months of the year at their "summer" home on Wonderland Trail in Blowing Rock. The view from the Broyhills' summer home, which overlooks the Linville Gorge, was spectacular. According to Stevens, "numerous guests expressed the feeling that they were standing on top of the world." Even with the 30-minute drive to Lenoir, Ed was always at work by 8:30 a.m. during the business week. His two favorite pastimes were golf and gin rummy, both of which were frequent pursuits. According to Stevens, Ed assisted in the design of several golf courses, including the one at Blowing Rock. 330

As North Carolina's National Committeeman of the Republican Party, Ed Broyhill worked with leading Republicans in the country. His interest in politics resulted from his interest in people and the future of the nation. He supported such politicians as Bob Doughton, Ken Wherry, Bob Taft, Carroll Reece, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and Barry Goldwater. On several occasions, the Broyhills entertained these leading Republicans at their home in Blowing Rock. ³³¹

Throughout North Carolina, Ed Broyhill contributed liberally to churches, hospitals, universities, and community development projects. At Appalachian State University two buildings are named in honor of him and his wife, Satie Hunt. Satie served on the ASU Board of Trustees from 1957 to 1965.³³² Superlatives used most often to describe Satie include "most generous — she is always giving of herself; most energetic — she never seems to tire; best-natured — she is always in good spirits; most thoughtful — she is always doing something for someone." Satie loved meeting new people and entertaining, and Blowing Rock was the perfect place for her to pursue these interests. According to her daughter, Allene, "If there was anyone at the Green Park Hotel who had not seen Blowing Rock, Mother would scoop them up and give them the grand tour."³³³



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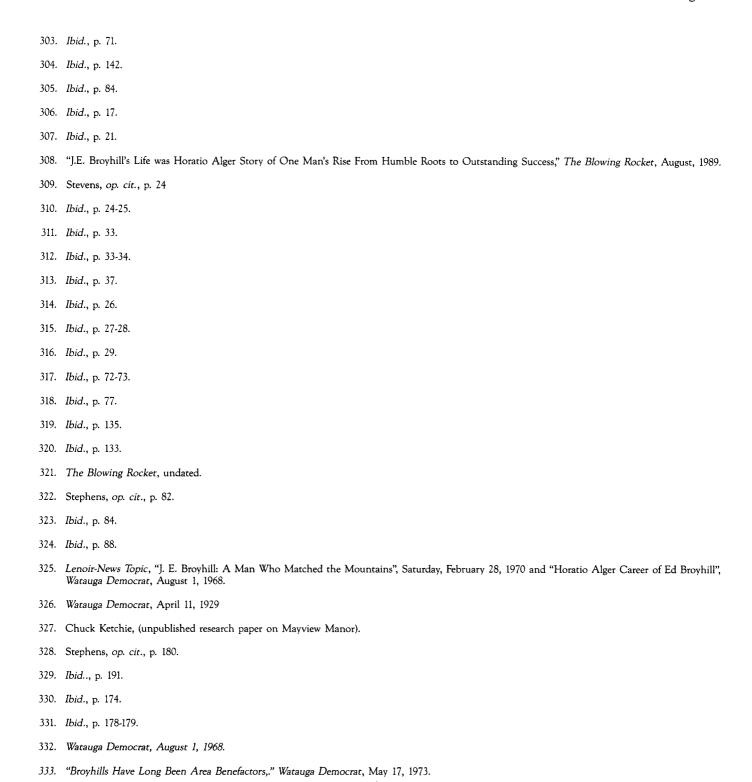
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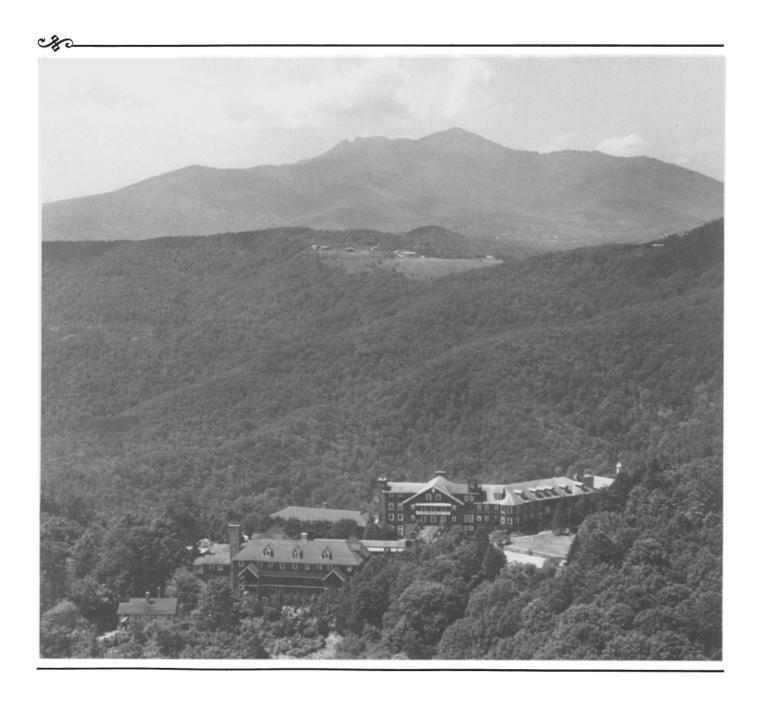
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CHAPTER IV

Hotels, Inns and Boarding Houses

Before Blowing Rock's incorporation as a town in 1889, the area was attracting people from the surrounding foothills and lowlands who wanted to escape the summer heat and enjoy the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Husbands sent their families here during the Civil War so they could avoid the horror and bloodshed which accompanied large troop movements in the Piedmont and coastal areas. But those early visits were a far cry from tourism as we know it today.

Colonel Robert H. Gray, who along with John King built the Blowing Rock Hotel in 1888, remembered those early "tourists" and reflected on the pre-hotel era in Blowing Rock. It was basically a tourist camp in those days. There were no accommodations except camping space. Families would come and just pitch their tents, build campfires to cook on, and sleep on the ground.¹

Colonel Gray said that during the mid-1800s, visitors to the Rock would leave their campsites intact and unattended while they explored the wilderness around them. Campsites could be found by the smoke rising from the evening fires, and local people would venture out to welcome the summer visitors.² It was these early campers who began a tradition which has evolved over one hundred years of our town's existence. From small boarding houses and charming inns to superb hotels, the town and its accommodations have changed. But during those years of growth and modernization, one thing has remained constant, the town's reputation as a great host for seasonal visitors.

One of the earliest boarding houses to offer a welcome alternative to camping was the Morris House. William M. Morris purchased the home of Amos Greene in 1874 and promptly opened for summer boarders. He was apparently highly successful in this venture, furnishing guests with excellent fresh food from his garden, hens, and milk cows. His deep feather beds were like heaven on earth when compared with camping. They did wonders for the legs of tired fishermen.³

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Mr. Morris did himself proud. W.W. Sherrill was quick to note Morris' success and he purchased the Harper property for the purpose of opening three small houses for summer boarders in 1877, at what was known as "Fairview."⁴

The Watauga Democrat reported on the unexpected popularity and growth of the small community:

This delightful summer resort, already a smart village, has grown in importance faster than the most sanguine of its well-wishers anticipated two years ago. It has become one of the favorite resorts in Western North Carolina and continues to grow in popular favor. The best people of this and the neighboring States come here in preference to any other part of the mountains and every scientific man who has visited the place has testified to the superiority of the location at Blowing Rock over that of any other health resort in the South. One gentlemen, who has travelled the world over, enthusiastically says that there is not on the globe a place that combines as many provocatives, to coin a word, to recuperation and building up a worn-out system as Blowing Rock. The air is pure, the temperature moderate, and malaria cannot long remain in the system of any invalid who long sojourns there.

The late Professor Kerr has said that Blowing Rock possesses advantages that no other part of the mountain section has as a health resort. Senator Ransom is a great believer in the place and he and his family spend every summer there. Several gentlemen, including Major H.F. Schenck, of Cleveland, and Dr. Rumple, of Salisbury, have bought lots there and will build cottages. Hon. Geo. Davis, of Wilmington, who spends his summers there, has bought the new cottage lately built by Mr. Morris. Dr. Kenworthy, a distinguished Florida physician, is an enthusiast about the place. He discovered a few weeks ago, a strong chalybeate spring on the premises of Mr. L.W. Estes.

All of this growth and boom would have been impossible but for the enterprise of Mr. J.G. Finley and his

co-workers who built the Watauga Hotel, which has been a success from the start and is growing in popularity. The present season has been a great success. This hotel and the other boarding houses have built up a market which has made money plentiful among the people living in that locality.

Indeed, with the building of Blowing Rock's first hotel, the Watauga, in 1888, accompanied by an increase in the number of small boarding houses, the town could offer a variety of accommodations to a burgeoning number of summer visitors. These early seasonal residents were delighted with the opportunity to escape the sweltering heat of the lowlands and the increasing chaos and hustle-bustle of city living.⁵

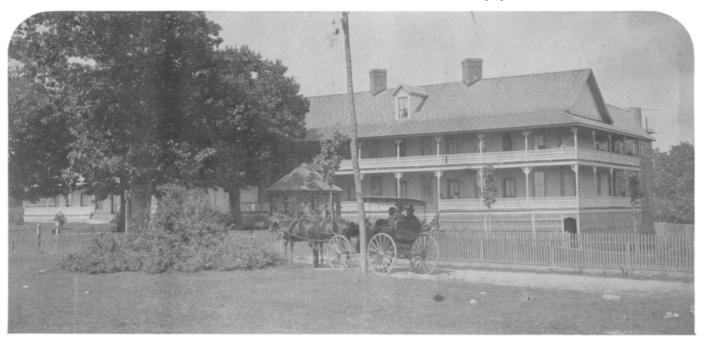
By 1889, the newly incorporated Village of Blowing Rock consisted of 200 inhabitants in the winter and 600 in the summer. There were three hotels, the Watauga, Blowing Rock, and Fairview, and innumerable boarding houses such as the Bradys' and Stuarts'. That same year, Etta Gregorie Norwell made the arduous trek to Blowing Rock: "We went to Hickory, where we found the train for Lenoir had already gone. Finding the heat unbearable we caught a freight train to Lenoir, riding on a bench inside a boxcar. At Lenoir we took a surrey and came up the long road to Blowing Rock, arriving to find the mountain top wrapped in fog.

"Mrs. King greeted us on our arrival at the Blowing Rock Hotel and gave us a cordial welcome. The Hotel was new then (formally opened in the Spring of 1889) and it was so crowded that five young men were sleeping in the room on one side of me and five young women in the room on the other side."

By 1891, a welter of activity surrounded the resort town. The *Lenoir News* reported on August 12th that, "There has been a rush to Lenoir and Blowing Rock this summer, but both places are like an omnibus and always have room for one more." The paper went on to announce that a story printed in the *Newton Enterprise* was incorrect. That story read as follows: "The Narrow Gauge Conductor received a dispatch here Wednesday night stating that the hotels at Blowing Rock and Lenoir were so crowded that they could not take any more boarders, and tourists were advised not to go farther than Newton or Hickory. There was never such a rush for Blowing Rock as there is this year!"

Earlier, in April, the *Lenoir News* noted that: "The Green Park Hotel at Blowing Rock is finished on the outside and is an imposing looking building. Work is progressing upon it and it will soon be completed and richly furnished. There will not be a finer hotel in the South. It will have 60 rooms, each of which will be furnished with an electric bell and with water from a complete system of waterworks. There will be fireplaces in every room."

Blowing Rock was even beginning to think and act like a seasonal resort, as one can see in this early media release: "Our town is putting on her summer garb now. The hotels and boarding houses are getting ready for guests. The Watauga is painting; putting in new carpets, etc., and will no doubt be as popular as ever with the courteous



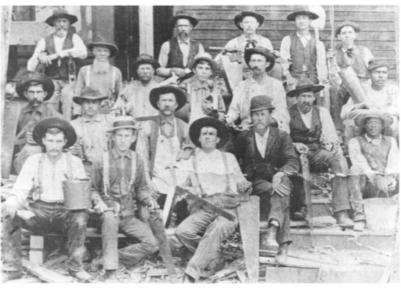
The Blowing Rock Hotel in 1917

Col. L.S. Williams as clerk, and Messrs. Corpening and Finley, both here to help look after the comfort of their guests. The Blowing Rock Hotel is also undergoing extensive improvements, painting, building more fireplaces, enlarging the office, etc. Mr. R.H. Gray is here with his charming wife, and with Mr. Arthur Parks as clerk, a pleasant time is assured all their guests."

"Mr. W.M. Morris and Mrs. Brady are prepared to give their guests the usual good fare and comfort for which their houses are noted. Besides these, there are several other houses open for boarding this season. The Bellview cottage by Miss Rebecca Reid, the Moore house by Mrs. H.C. Martin, and Mr. Ward's house by Mrs. Stewart; so you can see we are prepared to accommodate a large crowd.

"The Green Park people will have their magnificent hotel finished in a few days. Our merchants all have full stores and are wearing smiling faces in anticipation of good trade this summer." 10

When it opened for guests in the summer of 1891, the Green Park Hotel acted as a magnet, drawing large numbers of first-time visitors to Blowing Rock. Built by the Green Park Company, a syndicate of Lenoir businessmen led by Civil War veteran George Washington Finley Harper, the new Hotel was the most modern on the mountain. A promotional brochure written by Harper in 1892 had this to say about the new Green Park: "To meet the demand for a more comfortable



Carpenters who built the Green Park Hotel pose proudly with tools of the trade



The Green Park Hotel prior to addition of east wing

summer home, the Green Park Company has erected a large and commodious hotel on the top of the Blue Ridge. It has been furnished solely with a view to the comfort of its guests, and the proprietors have spared no pains to make it attractive in all respects. It is warmed by open fireplaces and furnaces, has hot and cold baths, electric bells and other modern conveniences, and is supplied with pure water from a mountain spring. Every room and hall is carpeted. There is a fine Ball Room, large Billiard Room, Bowling Alleys, Shooting Gallery and Tennis Court. There are both telegraph and post offices in the building."¹¹

Blowing Rock was also prepared in 1891 to host its first convention, or should we say "round-up?" The highlight of the summer was the assemblage of the North Carolina Confederate Veterans Association at the Watauga and Blowing Rock Hotels:

From all over North Carolina they came, by the hundreds, for the grand meeting where stories would be swapped, told and retold of the great conflict between the North and the South.

Host and organizer of the event was Mayor J.B. Clarke who, with the assistance of other leading citizens of the area, including I.N. Corpening, R.H. Gray, A.W. Parks and G.N. Folks, provided a busy week-long celebration. The war had been over for twenty-five years, but the memories and tragedies were still very much alive in the minds

of these veterans.

Wagons began arriving at the convention site days ahead of the scheduled date and, according to an early report, 'you would have thought the great war was beginning anew.'

Many of the wagons were pulled into place where their occupants could set up campsites, while others made their way to the two hotels, at least those that could afford the accommodation.

Tents by the hundreds were all over the mountainside and it 'gave the place the appearance of war times.' It is recalled that the rains were merciless that first day of the meeting, but most came prepared, feeling that conditions were much better than during some of the battles fought during the war.

On August 27, the first day of the meeting, wagons stretched from the plateau near the Watauga Hotel to a long distance from the community, all waiting to make their way to the event.

Once organized, a march began from the Watauga Hotel to the speaker's stand near the Blowing Rock Hotel. A band led the march, which was followed by soldiers, and then hundreds of interested citizens.

Major Harper introduced speakers for the occasion and one of the first was Capt. J.W. Todd of Jefferson, who began in his inimitable style a fine speech; 'but before he had fairly begun a severe and blinding storm came on bringing down the rain in torrents and broke up the meeting.'

During the evening the people trampled through the mud, stood in their tents and wagons, or sought shelter in the stores and houses. At night there was a dance at the Watauga Hotel.

Friday morning dawned with the sun dispersing the clouds and the gloom.

Other speakers included Judge J. Grey Bynum of Morganton who called on those gathered to 'put together with all haste a movement to prompt the legislature to build a suitable memorial to honor those that died during the war.'

He stated that 'the North got the victory, but the South is due the honor.'

Many others spoke that week, many of whom were officers with the confederacy, and many others that were simply soldiers.

The entire event was a decided success and a crowd of more than 18,000 was present.¹²

As the seasonal resident population grew and transportation up the "Turnpike" improved, more and more of the local residents became involved in supporting the needs of the hotels, inns, and boarding houses. Construction workers were needed, as were clerks and people to clean and cook. The local stores profited by the infusion of trade, and fresh farm products had a ready market. Dorothy Henkel Summerville, who began spending her summers in Blowing Rock in 1907, recalls the quaint charm of those early years: "Housekeeping was quite different in those days. Wagons would come to the house with chickens, eggs, butter, fresh vegetables, fruits in season and flowers. A part-Indian woman named Mary did our laundry, which was quite extensive. She lived down the hill behind the Blowing Rock Hotel. I remember the spring and stream that were in her yard. Bill Simmeril would take us in the surrey once or twice a week to deliver and pick up. Craig's Store and Hayes' Store were marvels. Between the two of them, they carried everything from women's hats to food and caskets."¹³

The first decade of the new century saw a good deal of modernization and expansion of seasonal accommodations in Blowing Rock. By 1912 the Green Park had installed a new water system with private baths and the Watauga



The expanded Green Park Hotel

Inn was wired for electricity by Ed Hoover of Lenoir. It was the first hotel or inn in the county to have electric lights. ¹⁴ The Lenoir News Topic enthusiastically reported that, "The Betterment Society of the town has done some valuable work in the matter of cleaner, better kept lawns and streets and the profusion of flowers which have added much to the beauty and attractiveness of the place. The resident people there, working with the people who have summer homes, are indeed making valuable improvements. A system of gasoline street lamps have been installed which is giving

satisfaction and through the efforts of some of the good ladies, the famous old public well near the Presbyterian Church has been restored and fitted with a modern fixture and covered by a neat canopy."¹⁵

And while improvements in public sanitation and modernization of the town's hotels and inns continued to attract increasing numbers of visitors, there was a strong undercurrent of concern among the conservative local residents over the changes and their impact on the town. In a speech delivered by Mayor G.M. Sudderth, following the clean-up campaign for the 1914 summer season, he spoke of the need to maintain high moral standards, as well as good sanitation.

In all the years your Mayor has resided at the Rock, he has never known this town to be so thoroughly cleansed in preparation for the summer. But it is so fortunate for us who have to battle with the elements year in and year out, that your City Fathers have an incentive for cleaning up the town, at least annually. And yet with filth moved and bad odors dispelled from sight and smell, there are 'dark clouds' on the moral horizon of our beloved community, clouds which can be dispensed only by the bright beams from the 'Sun of Righteousness,' aided by a common effort on the part of our Christian citizens who, to a man, should arise and with hand pointed skyward say 'that horizon must be cleared, and, God helping us, it will.'16

And while some cautioned about harm to the moral fabric of the community, tourists and cottagers continued to pour into Blowing Rock, ever grateful of the salubrious mountain environment. Alice Wood recalled early visits to the Martin House:

I made the first of my journeys from Lenoir to Blowing Rock in 1918. I had left Washington the night before, the thermometer registered 104 degrees. Mr. Presswood brought me up in his Ford car—the road a narrow pike between masses of laurel, seeming like a bridal aisle. I was speechless with pleasure, and when I came to Green Park to find a soft cool mist enveloping me I felt I was coming to a heavenly place.

The love affair began then and has never ended....

The same sense of heavenly coolness, quiet and serenity surrounded me as I entered Martin Cottage's living room. Soft green mesh curtains framed the windows looking out into the garden. Fine old comfortable furniture and the indescribable atmosphere that belongs to some houses, made me feel immediately at home.

Mr. Martin, courtly in manner and modest in his wealth of information, Mrs. Martin, not yet white haired and with sparkling eyes and witty tongue, enjoyed having us feel our well-being was their pleasure, not their task.

I had come chiefly for horseback riding. It was before the days of Mr. Tate and we hired from Mr. Presswood and Mr. Williams. My first year I rode 'Dixie,' Mr. Martin's little mare. I rode alone all over the village...soft dirt roads, down past the shoemakers...Mr. Watts, on the 'back road,' and in groups all over the Cone Estate. That first summer Mr. Watters drove a surrey and team over the Cone Estate. No motors were allowed in the Estate then.

We camped overnight and slept on the rocks, and just before sunrise, climbed a good trail to the top. Young Mr. Grover Robbins was of the party, lately back from the West—all to Blowing Rock's good.

Mrs. Martin was a familiar figure on the street. She wore a bright green sweater and did the various markets about town, looking for the best for her patrons. Shopping at Craig's and Smith's she would gather materials for 'Big Harriet' and 'Dove' and 'Fanny' and 'Cora' to transform into the dinners and suppers people came from far and near to enjoy.¹⁷

Improvements in the Lenoir Turnpike and infusions of development capital by the Blowing Rock Development Company helped generate increasing numbers of patrons for Blowing Rock's hotels and inns. The town's reputation as a good host spread throughout the southeast. Charlotte, second only to Lenoir in shaping Blowing Rock's development, noted the progress in a 1920 editorial of the *Charlotte Observer:*



The Martin House

Thanks to the magnificent public highways,

Blowing Rock has been brought within easy reach of Charlotte and each summer hundreds of Charlotte people run up to the Rock, to Linville and other cooling spots in the mountain vicinity to whiff the mountain breezes, cool off and become invigorated with draughts of ozone.

Without doubt one of the most picturesque beauty spots in the United States, Blowing Rock has for years attracted hundreds of visitors, despite its former inaccessibility. The building of the magnificient turnpike from Lenoir to the Rock has brought it within easier reach of the tourist and this season it is overrun with visitors.

One thing which has always been lacking in order to make Blowing Rock one of the most sought out resorts by Northern and other tourists has been its lack of amusements.

Realizing this fact the Blowing Rock Development Company has just decided at a stockholders' meeting to spend fifteen thousand dollars or more on the laying out of a modern golf course. Additional funds will be spent upon other amusements and attractions, and before another season is on Blowing Rock will be provided with the various sports and amusements which have contributed to the success of other resorts, in addition to its superlative scenery and cooling breezes.

This done it is undoubtedly true that henceforth the Rock will gain in popularity.

Many Americans spend hundreds of dollars in order to visit Europe and enjoy the scenery of foreign lands when here in Western Carolina they could rest upon scenery unsurpassed anywhere on the globe.

We have hardly appreciated our own assets until late, and just now, beginning to realize the wealth of beauty showered upon us, commissioners of the various mountain counties are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on good roads so that visitors may easily reach the hundreds of points of interest in the mountain territory. The result is a great influx of tourists to the Carolina mountains who formerly sought out the beauties of the Rockies and other places in this and other countries.

We are glad to note this announced improvement at Blowing Rock. Search as one may, no more beautiful mountain scenery can be found anywhere in the world than that of the Blowing Rock section.

Boarding Houses, A Family Affair

For a change of pace from the flurry of social activities found in the larger hotels, visitors could enjoy the simple, home-like comfort of numerous boarding houses in and around Blowing Rock. On the Turnpike between Green Park and Blowing Rock was the Weedon Place, which became known as "Grand View" and finally "Fairview" in 1915.¹6 This large frame structure was quietly hidden behind a rock walled entrance crowned with flowing rhododendron.¹9 Its privacy did not prevent visitors from admiring the "Grand View" from the porch. Also situated between the two communities was the Skyland Institute which closed after its 25th successful year in 1912. It was re-opened a few years later as the Wonderland Hotel with Annie Beatty as manager.²0

Sharing the hill with the Skyland property was the Stuart home. Mr. Herbert Stuart, along with his brothers and sisters, converted their house into a family-style boarding house which quickly became famous for the fine food. When E.J. Blackwell bought the Stuart Hotel in 1945, he changed the name to the more descriptive "Farm House" and kept the family style theme while redecorating the furnishings and modernizing the facilities. In Ruth Vardell and Gaston Gage's "Blowing Rock Memories", the beautiful location of the Farm House is remembered by a prominent neighbor: "Mrs. Stringfellow (of Chetola) built the house on the ridge next to where the Farm House is located. When she built it, it was not much more than one room and a porch. It was used to sit and look at the sunsets and serve tea. She said that all of her friends would look out at the view and say "Oh My." She named it "Oh My" and it still goes by that name. By 1954, the Blackwells added a unique attraction to serving at the Farm House by employing singing waiters and waitresses. These singing servers became an institution at the Farm House and brought visitors from many miles away to be entertained by their talent.

Adjoining the Watauga Inn, in the heart of the Village, was the Martin Cottage, built in 1870 as a private residence. To accommodate the increasing number of visitors, the Martins would gradually add about one room each season until the Martin House became an odd conglomeration of 14 rooms (including 4 living rooms) with no two doors or windows having the same measurements.²⁵Mrs. Johnsie Martin's sparkling eyes and modest wit delighted the guests and citizens alike. She and her family entertained with hilarious games, masquerades, and parties. On one occasion when the event was a "baby party," 6ft. 200lbs. Jim Williams showed up in his mother's night gown and a closefitting baby cap, a memorable night indeed!²⁶

Other popular boarding houses included the Brady House, near the Blowing Rock Hotel, and the Estes House. Like

all boarding houses of their time, these early accommodations were family "homes" in every sense of the word. They were managed by the family and each had a unique personality. The Brady house attracted visitors by offering art classes under the tutelage of Elliot Daingerfield while the Estes house (the present site of Chetola) was memorable to many for their lovely grounds with a pond and mill.²⁷

Watauga's Burning Legacy

In the 1880s there were no formal hotel accommodations available in Blowing Rock. One either stayed in boarding houses or camped. J.G. Finely and his associate changed that in 1888 when they built the Watauga Hotel. Located on Main Street, where the current municipal park is located, it was a two-story structure with a line of cottages on each side. The cottages were of the same style as those which would later be built at the Green Park and Blowing Rock Hotels. Each contained two rooms and opened out onto a common porch. Room and board for the summer of 1888 was \$15 a month.²⁹

The Watauga Hotel, later known as the Watauga Inn, was unique because of its location in the heart of the Village. Guests were exposed to a wide variety of people and activities as the villagers went about their daily affairs. Children playing, merchants engaged in trade, the coming and going of people on horseback and in carriages, all contributed to the feeling guests had of being a part of the community.

Before the turn-of-the-century the Watauga Hotel established a splendid reputation. Mr. Finely and his able clerk Col. L.S. Williams saw to the varied needs of their guests with great success. When the Hotel was completely destroyed by fire in the early 1900s, it was immediately rebuilt on the same foundation.³⁰ Renamed the Watauga Inn, it was operated by Mr. Tom Coffey and managed for many years by Mrs. Penley.³¹

The Inn was situated on a beautiful area of twenty acres, cloistered beneath the shade of a grove of sugar maples with flowered walks and rustic seats scattered about. A tennis court on the front lawn afforded the sportsman ample opportunity for exercise.³²

The Inn, which had become Blowing Rock's only year-round hotel, was again razed by fire in 1926, at a reported loss of \$20,000.³³ It was especially tragic because only a small portion of the loss was covered by insurance. The fire broke out on the second floor and within minutes forty foot flames engulfed the entire frame. The *Watauga Democrat* reported on the tragedy and the heroics surrounding the event:

The frame building burned so rapidly that it was only by fast work and with the greatest difficulty that the furnishings were removed before the flames reached them. Heroic work on the part of almost every citizen in town resulted in saving all of the furnishings, with the exception of some that were broken in throwing them from the second floor windows.

Among the first to reach the fire were the pupils of the Blowing Rock School. Principal A.E. Mercer placed the younger pupils under one teacher, and then, with the older pupils, boys and girls alike, he went to the fire, and the boys entered the building and threw the furnishings from the doors and windows, while the girls carried them beyond reach of the flames. Post office employes, business men and workers in every store on the main street did everything possible to help prevent the fire from spreading. Happily, no high wind was



Tom Coffey, Sr.

The Watauga Hotel

blowing, and this kept other houses from catching.

In the absence of an organized fire department, no effective means was available for extinguishing the fire. All of the two-inch hose in town was requisitioned, and a line was run from the fire plug in front of the hotel to the cottages surrounding it. These cottages were sprayed with water and saved, although for a while they were threatened with destruction. Coals, falling on the house of N.C. Greene, town councilman, ignited the roof, but it was quickly extinguished and did no damage.

As the fire started just at noon, the dinner table was set, and it was carried to the street with the dishes on it. Workers who entered the house found two great pans of corn bread, done to a turn, still in the oven of the kitchen range, but they did not partake thereof.³⁴



The Hob-Nob Inn

Tom Coffey originally announced that he hoped to rebuild the Inn, but the property remained unused until 1939 when it was acquired by the town for use as a public park. This is one incidence when good resulted from tragedy because had it not been for this fire we would not have our beautiful park in the heart of the village.

In September of 1928, the Hob-Nob Tea Room, one of the most popular summer social gathering places, was transformed into a year-round hotel under the name of the New Watauga Inn. Located at the former site of Cicero Miller's store, it was managed by Mrs. W.P. Penley, who was for many years manager of the old Watauga Inn.³⁵ Incredibly, forty years after the Watauga Hotel fire and twenty years following the Watauga Inn blaze, the New Watauga Inn was engulfed by flames in 1946. It should take no one by surprise that since that date, no other building in Blowing Rock has been named "Watauga."³⁶

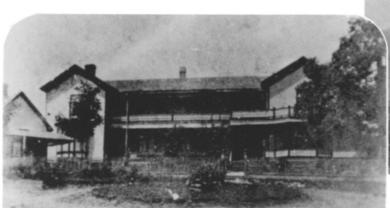
The Blowing Rock Hotel

For over thirty years our community was blessed with the variety of three large hotels: the Watauga, the Green Park, and the Blowing Rock. The latter of these was built by Colonel Robert H. Grey and John King in 1888.³⁷ Unlike the Watauga Inn, however, it did not reach the zenith of its popularity until the late 1920s and early 1930s.³⁸ According to Dr. Chalmers Davidson, the Rhododendron Inn may have proceeded the Blowing Rock Hotel and was located near the same site. "The Rhododendron Inn was a family institution, owned and operated by Mrs. Janie Hemphire Stringfellow. My father and mother, Zeb Vance and Kate Gaston Davidson, spent their honeymoon there as guests of Janie Stringfellow. The Rhododendron Inn burned about 1902 or 1903."

The Blowing Rock Hotel was not fully modernized until the summer of 1930 when each of the thirty-six rooms was installed with a private bath and hot and cold running water.³⁹ The building and its surrounding cottages were located at the intersection of Highway 321 and Chestnut Drive. Mr. Gwyn Harper, a long-time summer resident remembers that "it was a truly beautiful location, uniquely beautiful among the early hotels, facing Grandfather Mountain and the Johns River Valley."⁴⁰

It was during the late 1920s that Donald J. Boyden managed both the Mayview Manor and the Blowing Rock Hotel. As if that were not enough to worry about, he was also owner of the Blowing Rock Hotel. He took great pride in attracting prominent citizens to his establishment. Among those registered in the summer of 1930 were former Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and Mrs. Daniels of Raleigh, Judge and Mrs. Frank Daniels of Goldsboro, and Mrs. Josephus Daniels Jr., of Raleigh. Josephus Daniels had been a close friend of the deceased textile magnate Moses H. Cone.

Boyden hosted the largest gathering of the 1927 summer social season when he entertained guests of the two hotels and many summer residents at a barbecue and barn dance. A large field on the Yonahlossee Road near Coffey's Gap was the gala site. It was decorated with "dozens of Japanese lanterns strung over the grounds, and hundreds of guests





View of Grandfather Mountain and the cottage of David J. Craig from The Blowing Rock Hotel

The Rhododendron Inn

ate at improvised tables, while Taylor Williams' string orchestra entertained with music. After the barbecue, the guests repaired to a large building on the field and engaged in a barn dance until a late hour."40

On June 17, 1939, the Blowing Rock Hotel, with Mrs. Lucille K. Boyden as manager, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with the distinction of being the oldest resort hotel in the United States that was owned and operated by the same family.⁴²

The Plain Shoe Popularity of the Green Park Hotel

The Green Park Hotel is unique in that it was the heart of the community of Green Park before it was annexed by the town of Blowing Rock in 1927. It not only operated as a hotel but it also served as something of a community gathering place. Residents in the Green Park area had their own post office, telegraph, grocery store, and golf course. It was residents of the Green Park area who held the first horse shows and the earliest summer cottages were built near Green Park. In those early years, mail was addressed to Green Park, North Carolina.

As the automobile became the prevalent means of transportation and the use of horses and carriages decreased, the distinctions between Green Park and the Village of Blowing Rock lessened. Gaston Gage and Ruth Vardell remember mail delivery to Green Park before the automobile: "Like everything and everyone in those days, the mail would arrive by way of the Turnpike. Passing by the Green Park Hotel before reaching Blowing Rock, the mailman would ride in on horse drawn buggy and blow his posthorn; a signal to all the visitors that their mail had arrived."

The turn-of-the-century brought new ownership to the Hotel when George Harper, Hugh Gwyn, and Joseph Besner bought Green Park. During this era Rick Harper managed the Hotel while Willie Williams from Columbia, South Carolina was the chef. Naturally, a hotel the size of Green Park helped to support the local economy. Beef for the menu was supplied by the venerable Will Craig. Area farmers would bring in wagons full of fresh vegetables, seasonal fruits, and flowers. "If we ran short of supplies," said Roby Gilbert, "I got out with a horse and buggy and found some."



C.V. Henkel, Jr., Dorothy Henkel, and David Craig in front of the Green Park Hotel

For a short while Green Park even had their own produce and dairy farm which was tended by the waitresses and other employees.⁴⁵

A substantial expense of operating a hotel in those days was firewood. The Green Park, with its clapboard siding and precious little insulation was no exception. A large wood stove was used for cooking and on cool days the bellboys stayed busy maintaining fires in each of the guest rooms. The business ledger of C.V. Henkel reveals that in 1915, firewood was cut and delivered to the Hotel for slightly over a dollar per cord.⁴⁶

By 1913 the Green Park Hotel was "the place" to stay in the mountains. It was receiving state-wide acclaim as a result of the reputation and hard work of Major Cobb, the manager from Raleigh.⁴⁷ People made the difficult trip and stayed for the entire season. Guests got to know one another and many close friendships were formed. It was very much a club atmosphere.

Vickie Sylvia, a Watauga County native, worked at the Hotel from 1916 to 1934 as manager of the dining room. "We were all sort of backward hillbillys then," said Sylvia. "Hadn't had a chance to meet people much. The Hotel was all different then, too. The guests came from the Carolinas—mostly from Charlotte. They came in the spring and stayed



The Yadkin Spring with the Green Park Hotel in the background

until fall. They brought trunks of clothes and some even brought nurses for their children.

They didn't zip up the highway then, either. People took the train to Lenoir and were met there by buggies, surreys, and hacks. Wagons would carry the luggage. It was a pretty slow and rough trip up the mountain in those days."

Stanley Green, a descendant of the Greene family, the first to settle in Blowing Rock, and from whom the Green Park area took its name, remembered trips up the Turnpike from Lenoir. "Things moved pretty slow, horse-drawn surreys and baggage wagons. It was hard on some of the old folks. It wasn't as dusty as you might think, though, because sometimes the road went straight up the creek."

Roby Gilbert, the toll gate keeper until the early 1920s, remembers that the folks in Lenoir called the road the "Lenoir-Blowing Rock" Turnpike and the Blowing Rock folks referred to it as the "Blowing Rock-Lenoir" Turnpike. "In those days the train would get to Lenoir about two (2:00 P.M.) and it would be dark before anybody reached the Hotel." Visitors who drove their own automobiles were charged a dollar to use the Turnpike. "A two-horse wagon was twenty-five cents, one-horse wagon twenty cents, and a horseback rider ten cents. The Hotel (shuttle) surrey was free for guests."

Once they arrived at the Hotel, guests spent a great deal of time engaged in serious relaxation. The rocking chairs on the front porch were a favorite gathering spot.⁵⁰

In the early '20s, Mrs. Sylvia supervised the work of twenty waitresses. "They worked from 7 A.M. to 10 P.M., seven days a week. They made twelve dollars a month and their tips averaged about a dollar a day." She remembers how families often had the same dining table every summer for years. "See that table? The Gaston Galloways of Charlotte had that table every summer."



Green Hill Road and the Green Park cottages in the 1920s

"The Green Park was always plain as an old shoe, but it was expensive. It was the monied people who came here. Dinner must have cost \$2.50 then. The girls (waitresses) used to carry big white pitchers of water to the dining room from the spring near the Hotel. It's all cemented over now; they say the water's contaminated."51

While the Green Park may have been "plain as an old shoe," its guests wore suits and dresses both day and night. It was a more genteel time then and life at the Green Park reflected the expectations of upper class society. There was an elegant dance every Saturday night with a large orchestra. "The Hotel even had a casino in those days. They wouldn't let us mix with the guests, of course," said Mrs. Sylvia, "so we'd stand right out here on the porch and look in the window at them dancing."

Over the years, the fortunes of the Green Park Hotel rose and fell with the times. During its heyday, though, it attracted such honored guests as Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Margaret Mitchell, Eleanor Roosevelt, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. For many years it was indeed the *grande dame*.

The Alexander Era

The arrival of Charlottean Walter L. Alexander in Blowing Rock in 1917 marked the beginning of a new and dynamic era in the town's development. In less than a decade, he would transform the Blowing Rock landscape forever by developing "Mayview Park." Heretofore, there were two principal residential areas: one was the town of Blowing Rock, often referred to as the Village, the other was Green Park. Now there would be a third, expanding Blowing Rock to the west.

In 1920, Alexander published a beautifully illustrated promotional travelogue featuring Mayview Park. Written and arranged by Crete Hutchinson, it was entitled *In Cloudland: Mayview Park, Blowing Rock, North Carolina*. The photographs were taken by H.W. Pelton and Earl Hardy.

This publication rivaled anything produced in America at the time and was exceptional in capturing the feeling and spirit of the Mayview Park section of Blowing Rock, and the rest of the Village as well. Because of its quality and distribution throughout the eastern United States, it brought Blowing Rock to the attention of thousands of prominent citizens and contributed to the town's growing reputation as a tourist mecca. The following are excerpts from *In Cloudland*:

High above the clouds and over hanging the John's River Gorge are the finest and most soul inspiring views of the Blue Ridge in Western North Carolina. From Blowing Rock to the Tryon Mountain, the Blue Ridge forms a deep curve half encircling the jumble of wild rocky peaks and cliffs that belong to the foot hill formation of the Appalachians. The little Village of Blowing Rock lies on one arm of the horseshoe while Tryon Mountain forms the other. From both points, directly in front is an enormous bowl filled with a thousand tree-clad hills and ridges that become higher and wilder toward the encircling wall of the Blue Ridge. The conspicuous bare stone summits of Hawk's Bill and Table Mountain rise sharp as dragon's teeth above the rest, while the sheer and shining face of the terrible Lost Cove Cliffs, dropping into some unexplored ravine, come to view on a clear day.

Mayview Rock, in Mayview Park, is forty-five hundred feet above sea level. It is accessible and is approached both from the Tennessee side through Johnson City, Tennessee and through North Carolina by way of Hickory. Johnson City is on the Southern Railway and is the preferred route for tourists from the south and all western points. At Johnson City a change is made to the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad which operates a parlor car service to Shulls Mills, North Carolina. This part of the journey is through the Doe River Gorge and affords the traveler views of many superb scenic wonders. The trip from Shulls Mills to Mayview Park is by automobile stage, the short distance of six miles over the Yonahlossee Road, a twenty-five foot motor road of maximum four percent grade.

Pullman service on the Southern Railway is obtainable to Hickory, where a change is made to the Western North Carolina Railroad to Lenoir. The Hickory route is the one usually preferred by travelers visiting this region from the north and east. At Lenoir an automobile stage meets all trains and the climb is made over a fine turnpike, a distance of twenty miles. The broad winding road is along the banks of the Catawba and Yadkin Rivers and the peaks of Grandfather, Beech Mountain, Hanging Rock, Hawk's Bill and many other peaks of the Blue Ridge are constantly in view. It is possible to make the trip from Lenoir to Mayview Park, Blowing Rock in one and a half hours and every moment is filled with exquisite glimpses of wonderful deep hemlock coves, of craggy rocks moss-grown and covered with the profuse blooms of the rhododendron.

In Mayview Park the trout lurk beneath the Glen Burney Falls and the sunset trails lead to heavenly vistas of the great range of which Grandfather is a part. On clear days the Black Mountains with Mount Mitchell outlined against the sky are easily distinguished while down below in the bottom of the gorge the John's River races merrily along, sometimes hurrying over a rocky bed in riotous cascades, sometimes flowing leisurely through straight sandy stretches. Little farm houses dot its banks and tiny plots of carefully tilled fields stretch in diminutive landscapes on the floor below. From Wonderland and Valley View Trails the views are superb. No words can describe the magnificent beauty and grandeur of the hoary old Grandfather with one of his many faces upturned against the sky, as viewed from the various points in Mayview Park and from the famous Blowing Rock. In the winter this genuine old man of the mountains when silvered with frost or blanched with snow presents the appearance of great age and in the summer is rejuvenated with mantels of softest green and purple. His slopes are tapestried in hangings of the richest hues in the autumn and at all seasons of the year he welcomes the lover of wild unspoiled spaces.

The wild flowers are finest in May and June but are profuse all through the mild warm days of summer and even into the crisp autumn which lingers well on into December. The shining galax is everywhere and is best about Christmas time when busy people gather the richest red ones for the Yuletide market. Galax picking is a profitable industry among the simple kind-hearted mountain folk. They come to the high ridges from the lowlands and erect rude shelters for their families for the season of gathering. All along the Yonahlossee Road enroute to Linville these little rock houses with their thatched roofs of hemlock and spruce boughs may be seen. For several weeks the leaves are a beautiful soft shade of red, the mellowed red of old wine, and they find a ready market in the cities where they are used as backgrounds for the brilliant cultivated flowers of the holiday season.

For the one who loves to wander on foot, new joys are ever unfolding and the freshness and fragrance of the air will remain in memory to the end of earthly days. Truly it is all so wonderful that you abandon yourself to the mere primitive instincts of utter enjoyment through the senses. Up Laurel Lane and Bird's Nest Trail the air is filled with tonic bitter fragrance. Great rhododendron and mountain laurel line the way and you go on and on without fatigue. At the top-most point of Wonderland Trail, Mayview Rock rears its lichen-covered face. Here the vista is unsurpassed and from its dizzy heights the gorgeous summer sunsets with the ever changing hues of the rich after-glow gives one an experience for lifeling retrospection.

Sometimes one rises early after a summer rain to find the great bowl beneath filled to the very brim with level creamy clouds that reach away from the shores of the peaks in a mighty ocean of billowing snowy whiteness. If the day is heavy perhaps the clouds will remain until the moon casts her gentle rays over the pristine loveliness.

The dream-like forms immersed in such a sea of mystical delight disclose a thousand enchanting pictures. When the atmospheric sea recedes the wild forms in the great basin seem so near and the dark colors are transmuted into the delicate blue of the Blue Ridge.

The horseback trails furnish temptations irresistible. A favorite trip is the climb up to the very top peak of the Grandfather before sunset and bivouac above the clouds for the night. Rising early with the sun the glorious views on every side disclose the entire territory with its scenic wonders.

Another ride that is always taken by the energetic one is over the trail to the famous Blowing Rock. There is an excellent motor road quite to the very brink of the eminence but to go by the trail skirting the great cliffs, passing Jaggy Point and enjoying the bounteous fragrance of the wild flowers, is by far the most satisfying way of enjoying the "Rock" itself. It is visible from every point along the devious way and stands like a great citadel overlooking the grand gorge beneath. Drooping violets under shading boughs of evergreen invite one to loiter by the path while darting rays of sunshine beckon and the music of hidden waters gives forth the strains of invisible choirs. On the high plateau above great hotels with their busy murmurings of pleasure-seeking vacationists reach one while below all is wild and in its unspoiled splendor invites day dreams and fantastic imagery. The wild flowers and sweet-smelling herbs that love only high places permeate the evening breezes with sweet perfume while the great purple rhododendron and rose-hued laurel crowding against the hills and filling the open spaces remain in view until the last ray of the sunset's glow deepens into the lovely night.

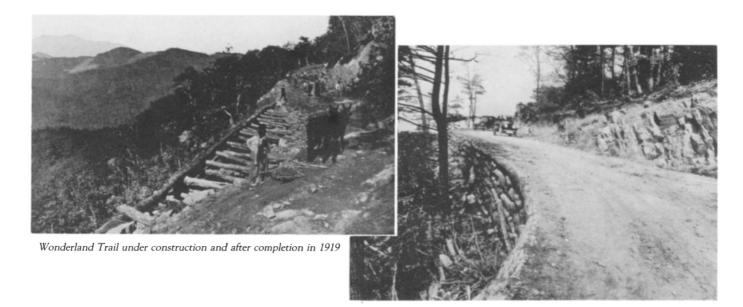
At times when Blowing Rock lies far above the clouds encircled in the delicate flaky veils of mist it seems detached from all the world and floating there like an island in a wind-tossed sea. Again the ledges of rugged rocks appear to perilously lean far out over a gorgeous garden of green and purple, peering into the darkened coves and fern grown dells. The colors of the Orient rapidly changing to softest rainy greens lightly touch the slopes of old Grandfather and as the evening falls a burning flush fades into the narrow line of blue, the blue of the wonderful Blue Ridge.

From beneath many of the gigantic rocks through Mayview Park the coldest purest springs gush forth, the clear narrow streams tumbling recklessly down dizzy heights through tree grown coves. Delightful pools are lairs for speckled trout, and anglers find long remembered pleasures in the translucent waters. The artist, the poet, the student and lover of all primitive open-air things here may reap a rich harvest of satisfying joys.

In the myriad of drives and walks, in the opportunities for exercise and healthful enjoyment, Mayview Park with its splendid new clubhouse, its comfortable, charming little cottages, the many miles of excellent motor roads is an ideal place not only for the summer months but for the autumn and the early days of spring. In the spring Grandfather is clothed in a delicate coat of new green and the running sap in the balsam and spruce gives forth a fragrance of purifying goodness. In the autumn the golden hues of late summer blend with the deep crimson of early fall and the whole basin is in magnificent royal array, and the innumerable birds sweeping southward, pause for a song among the forest trees. The great towering chestnuts give forth their fruit and many happy hours may be spent in nutting expeditions. So each season has its offerings and the visitor lingers on and on loath to leave a land so near the skies. The Great Stone Face of the Grandfather carved in rock and plumed with ferns, worn by the elements of time invites the traveler to return again and again for the enjoyment and rest that comes in the solemn grandeur of the great heights of the mountains.⁵²

Walter Alexander believed there was only one way to do things, and that was first class. He began the development of Mayview Park in 1917 and completed the initial phase just two years later. It was designed to be the finest resort in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The original tract of land was six hundred acres of splendid virgin timber, four hundred of which were sold to the United States Department of the Interior to become part of the national park system. Two hundred acres were commercially developed into Mayview Park with five miles of graded roads. All of the roads and foot paths were carefully graded so as to not be too steep and many panaramic overlooks were added for the tourist. Along the banks of the newly cut roads wild honeysuckle was planted. Alexander personally supervised much of the project to make sure large rock formations and towering chestnut trees were protected.

"Cottages," which varied in style and size, were constructed in Mayview Park. They were generally five to seven rooms with kitchen and bath. The exteriors were primarily chestnut bark with handsome pergolas and artistically hooded verandas disclosing beautiful views of Grandfather Mountain and Johns River George. Water was supplied by nine large mountain springs on the property. The cottages were for sale as well as for rent and lots were available for those who preferred building. Recreation opportunities included access to the Norwood Golf Course, play on Mayview's own clay tennis courts, horseback riding, swimming and picnicing. The new Mayview Club made a delightful



rendezvous for bridge, with its large ballroom windows overlooking Grandfather Mountain and beyond. Meals were served there for both tourists and cottagers. Reservations could be made for private dancing parties and tea was served in the afternoons on the verandas. Dinners and luncheons were prepared regularly and separate dining rooms for children and for white and black servants were maintained. The main dining room accommodated more than two hundred guests and was the scene of many elegant dances.

But Mayview Park was just the beginning for the imaginative and resourceful Alexander. He would go on to build the splendid Mayview Manor Hotel and to promote tourism in a way the town had not seen before nor has it seen since. He envisioned Blowing Rock on a grand scale and hoped to make it "America's Switzerland." He brought the town, and his business venture, to the attention of people throughout the state by recruiting large conventions to Mayview Manor. In 1923, the Watauga Democrat took note of his contributions:

Aside from the immense throng of summer tourists that is expected at Blowing Rock the coming summer (and the facilities for caring for them have been very much enlarged since last season), here are two gatherings made



Ice Skating on Mayview Lake in 1922



possible by Mr. W.L. Alexander, the greatest promoter this area has ever had; that will give it more advertising and mean more for its future development than anything that has ever happened for that now almost world-famous resort. The North Carolina Press Association has accepted the invitation of Mr. Alexander to hold its summer meeting at Mayview Manor, the great hotel property owned and operated by the Mayview Construction Company, of which Mr. Alexander is president. The date of the meeting to be agreed upon later, but it is given out that it will be sometime in June, before the real volume of summer visitors arrive. This is not a scheme of the town of Blowing Rock, but originated in the mind of the great promoter, and he it is that will bear the expense of the meeting. He proposes to furnish accommodations at his hotel for from four to five hundred editors, their wives, daughters, etc.

Through the invitation of Mr. Alexander the North Carolina Bar Association will also hold its annual meeting at "The Manor" sometime in July, which will be an event of great importance for that town and this section of the state at large.

The Democrat, in behalf of all our people, expresses its appreciation of what Mr. Alexander has done and is doing for our beloved and much favored county.⁵³

It was in that same year, 1923, that Alexander founded the Mayview Gun and Rod Club. The Club had 100 charter members who paid an initiation fee of five hundred dollars. Club members had the privilege of ten miles of trout stream and lake fishing. The stream ran through the Johns River Valley and that same area afforded hunting on 460 acres of land. He planned to build a dam there, flooding one hundred acres and making a lake approximately



The grand Mayview Manor Hotel

Mayview Manor with the new extended care medical facility in the background

two miles long with a shore line of five miles.⁵⁴ According to Rush Hamrick, Jr., who lives in the remodeled Gun club, world famous sharp-shooter and wild west cowgirl Annie Oakley managed the club in the summer of 1924.

Alexander moved boldly in 1924 to acquire additional property in Blowing Rock. *The Charlotte Observer* reported on the purchase:

Definite plans toward creating the greatest summer resort and playground in the mountains of North Carolina were consummated here last night when W. L. Alexander, owner of Mayview Park and the Mayview Manor, purchased 300 acres of land from the Blowing Rock Development Company, including the golf course at the Green Park Hotel.

The announcement of the purchase was made today by Mr. Alexander. The Mayview Park area consists of 317 acres and with the addition of 300 acres near the Green Park Hotel, Mr. Alexander's holdings within the immediate environs of Blowing Rock will total 617 acres. Besides this property, Mr. Alexander owns 1600 acres of land along the John's River.

The figures in the Green Park property deal were not divulged. Alexander's greatest ambition is to place Western North Carolina on the map with one of the finest mountain playgrounds in America. The Green Park links will be revamped and the course will be converted into one of the most desirable and challenging courses anywhere. In a few years he hopes to popularize the links to the extent that state, invitational and national tournaments may be played there.

In addition to the land purchase, Alexander announced that Western Union will inaugurate immediately a twenty-four hour service out of Blowing Rock with a direct loop to Charlotte. Such a service will make it possible for summer visitors and residents here to be in constant communication with the outside world.⁵⁵

Alexander wanted easy communication with the rest of the world because he planned to bring influential people to Blowing Rock. "Movers and shakers" in business, industry, and government would vacation in "America's Switzerland" and they would need to be within reach at a moments notice.

Then, abruptly, Alexander's dream came to an end. His death at the Hotel Charlotte in the fall of 1925 came after a short illness. The entire community was shocked. By November, the Mayview Manor Company and all of his great plans had been placed in the hands of receivers as a result of a suit filed by the estate's creditors.⁵⁶

Dorothy Henkel Summerville remembers how the development of Mayview Park and the building of Mayview Manor changed social life on the mountain. "Not only was it lovely looking, but they had continental food and service. They even had a stock broker and a ticker tape. The clientele was very different from what we were used to. People came from everywhere and their Saturday night dance became 'the thing.' At Horse Show time you stood in line to be served the most elaborate buffet you can imagine. All sorts of things carved out of ice, fancy molds of every description and every delicacy you can think of. They built a swimming pool on the view side of the Hotel, a nine hole golf course where the horse show grounds are now, and houses began to spring up throughout Mayview." Among them were the Lloyd Summervilles' storehouse just below the Hotel, the Mebanes' "Greystone," and the homes of prominent citizens Cameron Morrison and Joseph Cannon.

After Alexander's death, the Manor was purchased by Thomas Broyhill and C.E. Hayworth. It was Broyhill who, in the '30s, leased Mayview Manor to the famed hotelier Milton Chapman. His name was synonymous with fine hotels in Florida and he brought those same high standards of service to Blowing Rock.

Through the '50s, Mayview Manor was more than just a hotel, it was a way of life. It stood for gracious living, of white linen suits and straw hats, tennis dates and afternoon tea on the veranda, fresh flowers and white-gloved bellmen, horse show breakfasts and centerpieces of sculptured ice, ballroom dances and fashion shows, wicker chairs and stone fireplaces, old friends and balconies with a view. It was a grand era in the life of our community.



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CHAPTER V

"Book Learning" In Blowing Rock

Noted Appalachian scholar Cratis Williams once observed that "the man of the hills takes education seriously and he is eager to see his child educated." This generalization about the importance of "book learning" to the mountaineer has been a reality for the people of Blowing Rock since antebellum days. Our Community has generally appreciated the value of schooling and this is reflected in the fact that we've had over a dozen schools in the community since the 1850s.

The road to adequate schooling, though, was not always a smooth one. It was a road paved with varied philosophical and pedagogical objectives and a heavy layer of local politics, mountain style. In the end, though, the story of education in Blowing Rock has been one of progressively better schools, more modern equipment, and highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The Sprouting of School Houses

In the 1850s, as North Carolina developed "one of the best educational systems in the south," the first school opened in Blowing Rock. Located where Town Hall and the Library now stand, this earliest known school was a small log cabin. The Greene, Bryant, and Henley families were responsible for its construction and it operated until the outbreak of the Civil War, when most of the schools in the area closed because of the hostilities.³

The story of pre-Civil War education in the county is one of courage and determination. The schools made slow and uncertain progress. These early schools were "subscription-based" and operated after the crops were harvested. They were taught by men and women who charged as little as \$1.50 per pupil for three months.⁴

Under the School Law of 1839, limited funds became available for the support of public schools. The Literary Fund furnished two-thirds of the money or \$40 per school, and the county furnished one-third, a total of \$60 per school per month. In 1841, the school law was amended to require the county to raise by taxation one-half the amount spent for each school. By 1850 the teachers' average monthly salary was \$12 to \$15.5

After the war ended in 1865, few schools in the Highlands were in operation. The economy of the state and the region was in shambles, and it was not until the early 1870s that schools began to re-open across the state. Blowing Rock was more fortunate than most small communities at this time because a private school, located near where the Shulls Mill Road and the Blue Ridge Parkway intersect, operated continuously from 1865 until 1871.6

Around 1891 or 1892 the editor of *The Charlotte Observer* was visiting in Blowing Rock and stopped to visit a school beside the road. He remembered the visit this way:

One day while passing along the Shull's Mill road, we passed a plain little wooden school house near the side of the road. Impelled by curiosity we entered. The school had just begun and the classes were being organized. The simply clad bashful girls and awkward boys, some of them nearly grown, were seated on rude benches placed along the walls. The teacher was a light-haired, fair-faced girl, about 17 or 18 years old, it seemed. Her countenance was beautiful, her voice sweet, her manners gentle. She said she lived near Boone, and was educated at Claremont College. She seemed to have entered upon life's duties so trustingly — who does not wish that her life may be crowned with success, and that the fragrance of her good works and pure character may always linger helpfully about those who happily may come near her and about her? Blessings on thee, little teacher.

It was rather strange to find one so sweet and kindly sympathetic among those wild surroundings. It seemed as if the delicate rose had gone to teach school among the hills, with the sunburned orchids and freckled tiger lilies as her pupils.

The teacher referred to was Miss Blanche Hagaman. She later became Mrs. Ben Councill of Boone and the mother of Tracy and James Councill.

The next known school in the area was another small, private academy located in the old Flat Top Church. Operating in the 1870s, this was probably the first Cool Springs School.⁷

It was not until the 1880s and early 1890s, that Watauga County operated its first school in the Blowing Rock area. This was the Flat Top School, located where the town water plant is today. The curriculum included arithmetic, reading, spelling, and writing. One of the teachers at Flat Top School was Blanford B. Dougherty, who went on to found Watauga Academy in nearby Boone.8 (Watauga Academy would later become Appalachian State Teacher's College and Appalachian State University.)

Because the Watauga County Courthouse burned in March, 1873, official records are not available on the county's earliest schools. The minutes of the County Board of Education do indicate, however, that J.W. Thomas functioned as Superintendent in 1885. At that time, white teachers were paid \$17 a month and black teachers received \$15. Funds were allotted each month to the Superintendent and others for services rendered that month. The school census was called "numbering the children." Funds to support the schools came from property taxes, poll taxes and fines. The Superintendent received \$2 a day for his varied services.



Miss Emily Prudden

Miss Emily

Among the most important of the early schools in Blowing Rock was the Skyland Institute, located near the present site of the Chateau Cloud Condominiums. Founded in 1887 by Miss Emily Prudden, Skyland represented not only a school but an important social movement in the region. The missionary movement that swept through the Southern Highlands around the turn-of-the century had a shining local example in the Skyland Institute.⁹

This movement was the product of a curious journalistic phenomenon. Late in the nineteenth century, various local color writers saw the Appalachian region as fertile ground for their imaginative writings. Authors such as John Fox, Jr. and Mary Noailles Murfree churned out novels that portrayed the mountaineers as backward "hillbillies" who were the embodiment of an "otherness" that was unique in America. They suggested that mountaineers were "our contemporary ancestors," who lived in conditions that were strange and peculiar. These depictions sold vast quantities of books and magazines which promoted the stereotype of the mountaineer as simultaneously rustic and backward, charming and picturesque.

This idea of Appalachian "otherness" came to the attention of Protestant churches in the north, who saw the mountaineers as ripe for conversion to their respective faiths. Soon thereafter, missionaries arrived in the mountains, fueled by Protestant zeal. Miss Emily Prudden was one such woman. After

visiting Blowing Rock, she expressed the opinion that many of the people of the area were "keenly in their ignorace and need." Although she may have lacked an understanding of the folkways and customs of Southern Highlanders, she was not lacking in empathy or self-motivation. She shared her remarkably pragmatic approach to starting Skyland Institute:

There was no money in this section, and as I talked with the parents I'd say, "You feed your children at home?"—
"Yes." "Well, let them bring the same food and cook it here and I'll do all the rest." So I had seven cook-rooms with stoves, tables well furnished, beds, lamps, fuel — and such a happy family. I furnished all books, bought eighty dollars worth at one time. To keep house was all the play the girls needed. At four p.m. all would be rushing around, preparing supper. The one first through the evening work went straight to the school room, and raking up the little Sankey hymnbook, began to sing, and soon the room was full, all rejoicing in the song service before the study hour.¹⁰

Emily Prudden was a remarkably resourceful and self-effacing person. According to a former student, "she was a little squatty woman (who) talked funny with sort of a brogue." A native Minnesotan, she left her home in Minneapolis and moved to the small rural community of Chester, South Carolina, where she assisted a former classmate in administering a home for girls. There she first conceived the idea of building a home for children, which she later constructed in Gaston County, North Carolina. It was while in Gaston County that she first visited the Blowing Rock area. She shared this poignant observation after the visit:

In the deep valleys were homes of poor, unlearned, but interesting people, shut out from all that makes life rich and lovely, again, no schools, no churches, no social life, one dark little store where women and girls coming up the mountain would barter their snap-beans, potatoes, and berries for coffee, tobacco, and bacon....

I would take pen, paper, and reading and sit in the woods near the highway and ask girls and women, after their hard toiling up the mountain, to sit by my side and rest. As I talked, I...would think..."They must have a school."¹¹

Miss Prudden later bequeathed her Gaston County school to a friend from Minnesota, who ultimately deeded it to the Presbyterian church. With singular dedication, she returned to Blowing Rock in 1886 to purchase land for a school. Only one year later, Skyland Institute, Blowing Rock's most influential early school, opened its doors.

Prudden had been deaf since the age of seventeen and perhaps this encouraged her empathy for the disadvantaged. She unselfishly devoted her money, time, and talents to enhance educational opportunities for mountain students. A devout Christian, she had an honest, sincere approach to what she considered the Lord's work. She sought to provide the students with a basic education, "trusting in the dear Lord Jesus." ¹²

On the land she purchased, Miss Emily erected classrooms, dormitories and a chapel. She also purchased furniture, books and school supplies to complete the school. While Skyland was predominantly a boarding school for girls, several boys attended from as far away as Meat Camp. The curriculum consisted mainly of the three R's, with a healthy dose of spiritual guidance. Each evening after supper, all gathered in the large classroom for devotional services and study hour. Domestic duties, such as preparing and serving meals, were also part of the daily regimen at Skyland.¹³

It was the practice of Miss Emily to establish a school, remain there long enough to be assured of its continuance, and then deed it to the care of others. In 1890, after three years in Blowing Rock, Prudden deeded the Institute to the American Missionary Movement.¹⁴

She went on to found other schools in North and South Carolina, including schools at Elk Park and Brevard. In the last thirty years of her life, Prudden established a total of fifteen schools — an astonishing achievement that reflects her life-long dedication to educational missionary work.

Under the administration of the American Missionary Movement, Skyland continued what Miss Emily started. Schooling was much the same, maintaining the basic curriculum, enhanced by religious training and domestic responsibilities.

Protestant churches in the north that were affiliated with the American Missionary Movement would often collect used clothes and send them to the Southern Highlands. This clothing, after arriving at Skyland, was offered for sale at a modest price or was given away to residents of Blowing Rock.¹⁵

Another import from the north who arrived at Skyland was Miss Agnes Ruth Mitchell of Acworth, New Hampshire. She was one of the most outstanding teachers and beloved ladies who taught at Skyland. Her tragic death of diphtheria on December 14, 1896, saddened the entire community. She was buried in Mount Bethel Cemetery at the tender age of twenty-six.

In 1892, Arnette Jackson, another teacher at Skyland, wrote a friend in Nebraska about Blowing Rock and the young students she taught there. Her friend apparently found the letter newsworthy and shared it with the editor of the local newspaper, the Hemingford, Nebraska *Guide*. This first-hand account of Miss Jackson's observations and experiences struck the fancy of the *Guide*'s editor and he printed it in its entirety. Excerpts from the letter follow:

I think you are of the opinion that I am in a colored school. No; it is work among the mountain whites, many so low down as the negroes. After teaching so long in public schools, where each individual feels it is his or her duty to "boss" or direct the teacher, it is quite delightful to be as free and independent as we are here. We are the ones who do the "bossin" and the neighbors come to us for advice, and we are looked to as superior beings by those who know us, but are only "Northerners," or "Yankees," to those who do not.

There is only one Union man in the county here, and he, poor man, finds life scarcely worth living, he is so ill-treated and ostracized. Before coming here I hardly knew that there was a North and South, but one finds it out in a short time. The papers are so narrow and bitter and they misconstrue many things.

The town is a mile away and contains two or three little stores, a post office, and then many cottages and four large hotels within two miles. This is a famous summer resort, a thousand or more visitors coming in the summer on account of the cool climate, but in the winter the school is the only live thing and our meetings are the only ones for miles. We have nearly 80 pupils enrolled, about thirty boarding in this house and an adjoining cottage.

We have a number of girls who furnish nothing, but we have \$200 sent to us this year for the support of such girls. The girls live on corn meal, potatoes, meat, cabbage, and molasses. They use but little flour, preferring bread made of corn meal, water and salt to the best light bread. Their board only averages \$2 per month, and they grow fat and keep healthy on such fare. I should starve, I think. Oh, they are so happy here after they get over their home-sickness. As one girl said, after the Christmas week's vacation, "I was a heap worse off to come back than to go home."

Girls come here with stolid, expressionless faces, and they will scarcely comprehend the simplest directions; but it is beautiful to watch them change and see their faces brighten in such a short time. We learn more and more that it is our living and loving that helps them more than ought else. Miss D— is doing them a grand work in teaching them to cook and keep things neat. You cannot imagine the filth many live in at home. Houses with no windows, no stoves, all the family living and sleeping in one room, some half clad, and such wretchedness as to make one's heart ache.

This neighborhood has improved very much from the influence of the school. The girls are eager to learn and to try, but they are so "unthoughted," as they express carelessness. And most of all, they have no ancestory (sic) of honesty and truthfulness back of them. I had no idea before how devoutly thankful I should be for a good ancestory (sic). There is hope for the young people but none for the older ones. They, or many of them, are shiftless, lazy, and careless. It is not uncommon for a man to have three or more wives. The women hoe all day, do the housework, raise a family, chop the wood, milk, etc., and men loaf, visit and pretend to work a little, so one man can easily outlive several wives.

Oh, Mrs M—, we do need so much wisdom from on high in guiding these young people. It almost frightens me to think of what my influence may do, for we are watched and copied so. I do enjoy the work very much, and am happy in doing it, but nature asserts itself sometimes and we long to see friends and hear talk other than "reckon," "heap," "right smart," "plumb," "tote," etc. 16

A North Carolinian was in Nebraska at the time of this letter's publication and brought a copy of it to his home in Lenoir. It was re-printed in the *Lenoir News-Topic*. Several Blowing Rock residents subscribed to the *News-Topic*, and when the March 2nd, 1892, issue hit the streets of Blowing Rock, many in town were furious. Of the 80 students enrolled in Skyland at the time, 35 were withdrawn. Relations between the school and the town were tense for several months. Finally, the citizens of Blowing Rock appealed to Miss Emily Prudden to address the controversy. Although she was busy establishing another school, she responded to the appeal.

In a letter to the *Lenoir News-Topic*, she criticized the "indiscreet words" of Miss Jackson, and extoled the virtues of Southern Highland ancestry. She appealed to the Blowing Rock people to forgive, noting the words of Jackson's letter should not be taken to heart in Blowing Rock.

Miss Emily was successful in her appeal and relations between Skyland and the town improved. She eventually returned to Skyland in 1910, and spent two years there at the invitation of the American Missionary Association. Skyland closed in 1912, shortly before Miss Emily's death. ¹⁷

Skyland's overall impact on Blowing Rock was quite positive, despite the furor surrounding of the "Nebraska Letter." Skyland introduced a nine-month school term to the area, in contrast to the two- or three-month term which had existed. Many young students escaped the bondage of illiteracy through the fundamental curriculum

provided at Skyland.18

The closing of Skyland marked the end of an era in Blowing Rock's history. The missionary movement made a lasting impression on the lives of many young people by providing basic educational and religious instruction. Regional scholars would later suggest, however, that such opportunities often came at a price — the pride and sense of self-worth of mountain people.

The Lend-A-Hand Library

Another very prominent citizen who left her mark on Blowing Rock in the late 1800s and early 1900s was Mrs. Charles Carter. To her credit was the founding of the first public library in the entire area. It was called the "Mission House Lend-A-Hand Library," and there books were read and borrowed and storytellers wove tales of romance, adventure and excitement. The library not only provided many hours of enjoyment for adults and children but it also served as an important educational institution for the community.¹⁹

Mrs. Carter was also the founder of the first Sunday School in Blowing Rock. She gathered the children of the community together each Sunday on her lawn to read them Bible stories and to lead them in prayers and song. On weekdays she provided early learning experiences for them in the Mission House.

She began her work in Blowing Rock in 1888, and during those first years founded an organization called "Mothers' Meeting." Along with her physician husband, Dr. Charles Carter, the "Mothers' Meeting" provided instruction in caring for new babies and served as a source for guiding their upbringing.²⁰

Dr. Carter also carried books from the Mission House to bed-ridden patients that he served. Like his wife, he would often read to the sick people, many of whom were unable to read for themselves.

When the Carter family first arrived in Blowing Rock, they recognized the need for additional educational opportunities for the young people. From that moment on they were dedicated to the idea of teaching the young people to read and to help them discover in books a means of enhancing the quality of their lives.

In 1905, Mrs. Carter authored a book called "North Carolina Sketches" in which she revealed her appreciation for the Blue Ridge Mountains she loved so dearly. One of the guiding principles in her daily life was "Thy Will, O God, be done!" She quoted this verse often, and, according to those who knew her well, those were her last spoken words before her death in 1907.

The following appeared in the January, 1908 edition of the *Watauga Democrat*, in tribute to Mrs. Carter's influence on the Blowing Rock and Watauga communities:

From this love-haunted home, on the last day of the year, this great lady turned, never to see it again. She went to the friends whom she loved and loved her. Tenderly, unwearyingly, they nursed her, yet when she felt her feet treading the Valley of the Shadow — though they did not know the darkness was gathering about her — she asked to be left alone. Then, with the strength which had characterized her whole life, unattended by any earthly presence, she 'went through the straight and dreadful pass of death' not ever to be questioned any more, save on the other side.

Education Goes Public

Several other schools existed in the Blowing Rock area at the turn-of-the-century, helping give shape to the public education system that flourishes today.

Globe Academy was a training school, located off the mountain in the Globe valley, which advertised that it "prepares for college and practical life, gives very low rates, and is surrounded by unsurpassed moral influence." Globe Academy taught many young people from the region who went on to become influential teachers in their own right. It was at Globe Academy that Blanford Barnard Dougherty, already mentioned as a teacher at Flat Top School, was first inspired to become a teacher. He left Globe Academy, taught in Blowing Rock for a short while, and eventually founded Watauga Academy in Boone in 1899. Watauga Academy grew and soon became the most influential educational institution in the area.

As previously noted, the first county-operated school (1889-1904) in Blowing Rock was at Sandy Flat.²³ Sandy Flat School was in one of the four school districts reorganized by the county in 1897. The other three districts in the area

were Blowing Rock Village, Silver Lake, and Cool Springs.²⁴

Silver Lake School was located near where U.S. Highway 321 and the Blue Ridge Parkway intersect today. It was often referred to as the 'Lentz School' because John Lentz had a store adjacent to it and several of his sons attended.²⁵ It served the educational needs of that area until 1928.

Cool Springs School was unique among Blowing Rock's early schools. It was nomadic and had no permanent site. Rather, various homes and churches between Flannery Fork and Flat Top served as home. It began as a one-teacher school with grades one through five and later expanded through grade eight. It existed until the middle of the Second World War.²⁶

In the heart of the Village of Blowing Rock there was a school known as the "Old Spring School." Located near the Mayview Lake Spring, just off Laurel Lane, it operated from approximately 1900 until 1918.²⁷ It was in that year that the county apportioned money to build a new school in Blowing Rock.²⁸ This new school was built where Blowing Rock School is located today. It operated until 1927, when it was torn down to construct a new school building.

Another school existed in the Silver Lake District and is believed to have operated until approximately 1913. This was the Possum Hollow School, located on Possum Hollow Road, directly across from where the electric substation now stands. It was a one-room log cabin. Like many schools tucked into the hills, Possum Hollow School lacked even a yard to play in during recess. Kent Brown, who attended the school in 1910, says that having no yard meant:

We didn't play ball...mostly what we played during recess was what we called "follow the fox." What we'd do, one of us would get up in the laurel bushes, then the rest of us would chase. Now we played that more than anything else.²⁹



Cool Spring School just before consolidation with Blowing Rock



Sandy Flat School



Blackberry School



Aho School

Aho School students in 1913

Brown also remembers children iceskating up the Middle Fork River in the winter, from near where the town water plant is, to Chetola. There they would take off their skates and walk to school in the Village.³⁰

In the early 1900s, children still had to walk to school most of the time. In very bad weather some fathers would take their children on horse-back. Since families were often large, three or four children might ride on one horse. Sometimes parents would take their children in a wagon or if there was a big snow, on a sled.³¹

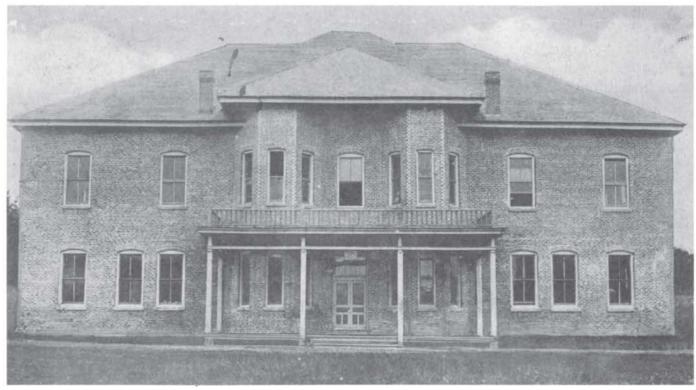
Lunch was carried in a big bucket or basket. Usually lunch for one entire family was packed in the same container. Biscuits were used to make sandwiches of jelly, applebutter, butter and brown sugar, eggs, and ham. Vegetables were sometimes taken, as well as fried "fritters," apples and cookies. Milk and cornbread carried in a jar was often a favorite lunch.³²

Attendance was frequently poor because of bad weather, sickness, or indifference. Many parents kept their children out to help gather in the crops. If a frost was expected, the whole family had to stay at home to strip or cut cane. Children, too, helped with molasses and applebutter-making and with hog killing.³³

On washday, water had to be carried and wood cut. The baby also needed to be tended while the mother washed. This often kept two children at home. In order to make less washing and save clothes, children changed into old clothes when they returned from school. Most children had chores to perform after school. A daily routine included chopping wood, carrying water and driving the cows home, as well as feeding all the animals.³⁴

The classroom was a far cry from what students are accustomed to today. Desks were homemade and students used slates, penny-pencils, and rough tablets. Some of the blackboards were painted on the walls. The larger boys cut the firewood and built the fires. Very crude toilet facilities were available, sometimes consisting only of a clump of bushes. Water was carried in a bucket from a nearby spring, and everyone used the same gourd or dipper. All lessons were recited from a long recitation bench at the front of the room. There were no examinations or report cards.³⁵

Because supplies came so dearly, a great premium was put on them. Penny - pencils were often cut in the middle to



Appalachian Training School

make two pencils. Notches were cut close to the top, and a string was tied around each pencil which was then worn around the neck to prevent loss.³⁶

The following books were recommended by the Watauga County Board of Education in 1898: Sanford's Arithmetic, Harvey's Grammar, Holmes' Readers, Morris' Geography, Mon's Histories.³⁷

By 1900, Watauga County teachers were required to obtain certificates before they were allowed to teach. Certificates were issued on the basis of an examination. In that year, 30 white and 2 black teachers were given examinations and approved by B. B. Dougherty, the County Superintendent of Schools. In 1901 Mr. Dougherty was authorized by the Watauga County Board of Education to conduct a County Teachers' Institute in the Court House for one week. Later the term was increased to two weeks. All teachers were required to attend this Institute if they desired to take the qualifying examinations.³⁸

By 1903, Dougherty had received state support for his Academy, which was to become Appalachian Training School for Western North Carolina. In May, 1903, school superintendents from seven counties met in Blowing Rock to decide where Appalachian Training School was to be permanently located.

Blowing Rock made a lucrative bid to be the host site. Coupled with Blowing Rock's offer of \$1,000, prominent citizen Moses H. Cone offered an additional \$1,500 and a "beautiful site." Although Cone also offered money if Boone or the Globe was chosen as the host site, it was Blowing Rock that received his unqualified endorsement. Mr. Cone, who had earlier built Sandy Flat School with his wife Bertha, had become a champion of educational opportunity for area young people.³⁹ Boone was ultimately selected as the site for Appalachian Training School, a decision that altered the character of both Blowing Rock and the county seat. Boone would become a university town and experience dramatic growth, while tourism and seasonal residents shaped the future of Blowing Rock.

The year 1928 is important in the history of public education in Blowing Rock. For several years prior to 1928, residents had petitioned the Watauga County Board of Education, for a tax raise to help build a new school. The Board finally agreed to the new tax rate and also agreed to help the town secure a new loan to assist in meeting construction costs. While the school was under construction, classes were held in local churches, offices, the old Town Hall, and vacant buildings. Sandy Flat, Silver Lake, and Blowing Rock Village School Districts were then consolidated into the new facility. In addition to the new school, the town boasted of a new school bus. This first bus was used to pick up students in the Sandy Flat area.⁴⁰

While the work of the Watauga County Board of Education was important in the development of schools in Blowing Rock, the Board also expressed concern over the moral character of the larger community. As with other parts of the county, the Board of Education felt their influence and guidance was intended to extend beyond the school grounds. Education was to be moral and the moral fiber of the community was within their purview. Accordingly, in the early 1920s, the Board regularly received reports from the county Superintendent of Public Welfare. In 1921 this welfare officer reported, among other things, that he had "visited the Moving Picture Show twice and had discovered nothing that he felt was of an immoral character." The parents of Blowing Rock's youth no doubt rested more easily as a result of the Board's vigilance.

By 1930, the length of the school term had been extended to 134 days. One year later the state assumed complete support for a six-month school term and in two years the term became eight months. It was also in the 1930s that pot-bellied coal stoves began to replace the old woodburning ones. Coal was cheap and furnished more heat for the schools, especially those which had high ceilings. Kindling for building fires was not furnished but was left to the ingenuity of teachers and children. Teachers often took kindling from home. All scrap paper was saved for kindling, and, before leaving school, children and teachers searched for dry twigs and sticks to start the fire the next morning. This would get the building warm earlier the next day.⁴²

Floors were oiled with linseed oil to keep down the dust. Teachers usually had to apply the oil, but in 1939 a maintenance man was hired to do this for the entire county. Six janitors were also hired that year.⁴³

"Store-bought" desks replaced the homemade ones. These were nailed fast to the floor and usually were double-seated, with a well in the center for a bottle of ink.⁴⁴

The Blowing Rock School of English, under the direction of Dr. Edwin Osgood Grover, operated in Blowing Rock between 1936 and 1938, coming here from Banner Elk. During its existence, it attracted a wide variety of students from varied backgrounds and some noted speakers. Margaret Mitchell of Atlanta, author of the sensational Book-of-the-Month best seller, "Gone With the Wind," was just one of many famous lecturers to spend the summer in Blowing Rock in support of the School. Miss Mitchell's visit to Blowing Rock came exactly thirty days after her book was released, but already it had sold over 201,000 copies.

The office of the School was in the "Greene Cottage," which today is part of the Martin House. Classes were also conducted in the Blowing Rock High School, with weekly Tuesday evening lectures in the ballroom of Green Park Hotel.

Among other well-known visitors participating in the Blowing Rock School of English were: Clifford Dowdey, author of *Bugles Blow No More*, a best selling novel of 1937; Hershel Brickell, literary editor of the *New York Evening Post*; and Charles B. Driscoll, editor-in-chief of McNaught Newspaper Syndicate and daily broadcaster for CBS.

Taxation Without Representation

Blowing Rock's school system was at the heart of a bitter and widely publicized disagreement in 1937 between the citizens of the town and those of Boone and the rest of Watauga County. Blowing Rock alleged taxation without adequate representation in the running of Village schools and gross neglect of the community's educational needs by the county Board of Education.

The disagreement led to a petition from citizens of Blowing Rock seeking annexation of the town by Caldwell County, which was described as "the gateway to Blowing Rock" and the home of many of Blowing Rock's largest landowners and prominent seasonal residents.

In January, 1937, a delegation headed by Mayor D.P. Coffey met with officers and directors of the Lenoir Chamber of Commerce to discuss the possibility of annexation. A petition was circulated and signed by more than ninety percent of Blowing Rock's citizenry requesting the change in township affiliation.

In an interview with the *Watauga Democrat*, Mayor Coffey said that in his opinion and that of the Board of Aldermen and other interested groups, "Blowing Rock has been grossly neglected by Watauga County and that Caldwell County officials and citizens would, in the event of annexation, provide the town with many long-sought improvements, and give his people representation commensurate with taxes paid by them."

Mayor Coffey pointed out that Blowing Rock had received nothing from the Works Progress Administration, which had spent many thousands of dollars on public improvement projects in the rest of Watauga County.

"Taxation without representation," Mayor Coffey concluded, "caused the formation of the American Republic. Blowing Rock people today feel they have not received proper recognition from Watauga officials, despite the fact that one-fourth of the taxes collected are paid by them. We hope that, in the event Caldwell takes us over, we will receive closer cooperation from their public officials."

A protracted struggle over the control of Blowing Rock's elementary and high school is believed to have precipitated the annexation initiative. The *Watauga Democrat* article quoted one Blowing Rock citizen as identifying the heart of the problem: "Only one local citizen is employed to teach in our schools. The principal and five teachers are residents of Cove Creek and three are residents of Boone."

Another resident stated that she and other citizens had repeatedly called on public officials, attempting to improve the standards of Blowing Rock schools, but had not succeeded in effecting needed changes. "They apparently turn a deaf ear to our pleadings and run the schools to suit themselves."

Caldwell County officials were sympathetic to the pleas of their neighbors to the north. The Lenoir News-Topic reported that "a plan was worked out whereby a joint committee of Blowing Rock and Caldwell County people would go to Raleigh for a conference with the state budget commission on details of the proposed change. It is understood that the budget commission will be asked to work out financial angles, which could include the possibility of Caldwell, in the event annexation proceedings should carry through, assuming her proportionate part of the bonded indebtedness of Watauga County."

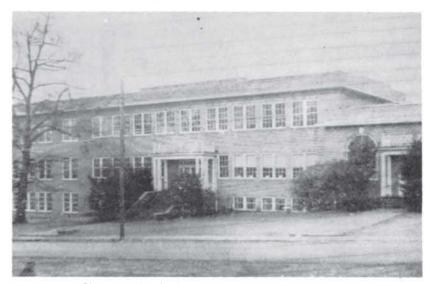
As mentioned previously, there was widespread support for the annexation movement in the community. Both year-round and seasonal residents expressed dismay with the relationship between Blowing Rock and Watauga County. Mrs. Moses H. Cone, owner of Flat Top Manor and Estate, was one of the early proponents of the annexation plan. She alleged that for a number of years she sought, through officials of Watauga County, the employment of a full-time fire warden, to be paid jointly by federal, state, and county governments. Her efforts went unheeded by the county. The Cone Estate had some of the finest balsam and spruce groves in the Southeast, which were protected only by privately-employed wardens. At the time, Mrs. Bertha Cone was the second largest taxpayer in Watauga County.

In February of that same year (1937), the *Watauga Democrat* published a statement from Blowing Rock Mayor D.P. Coffey. The following are excerpts from the statement:

"I know that the 95 per cent of our local citizenship and the 100 summer residents who asked for the change, love Watauga County, our home county (if we may be permitted to call it that), but as a last effort, so it seemed, to get something in return for about one-fifth of the total county taxes, we were driven to it after having been neglected, refused and ignored with little or no improvements, and so far as we can see, no interest in the development of our section. It seems that other sections have developed wonderfully, but let me ask if it is not partly on the tax money justly belonging to Blowing Rock? We are not charging Watauga county at large with these responsibilities

but I think that most of our 95 per cent feel that the county government and board of education are responsible and possibly a little crook (sic.) or two."

"We believe that many good citizens of the county who see the injustice being done are in sympathy with us, and they know too on whose doorstep the blame should be placed. When some fellow in the county rubs his face and says I have done this and that for Blowing Rock, and have been a friend and help to their school, please note that many of us do not believe it. We think he and others have been a great hinderance to our development or progress. Oh, yes, we have a school



Blowing Rock School prior to the WPA expansion of 1937

house which was constructed several years ago, after a long struggle. Even for this however, we paid a special tax for years after the state took over all schools in the state. We have little or no voice in the conduct of our school, in the employing of teachers or in the supervision thereof, and I believe many rural sections in North Carolina have better schools and buildings than our famous resort has. We invite you to see for yourself the neglected condition of the present building, the crowded condition of some rooms and the need for improvements, such as a gymnasium, new rooms and playground."

Ultimately, of course, Blowing Rock remained part of Watauga County. No bill was ever introduced in the legislature supporting the proposed alterations of county lines. Nevertheless, hard feelings remained and the issue of taxation



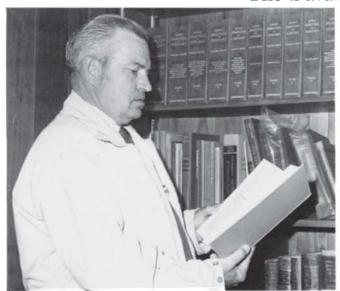
Mr. Miller's sixth grade class pose on the steps of the gymnasium of Blowing Rock School.

without adequate representation would continue to concern Blowing Rock citizens well into the 50s.

Perhaps one reason the annexation movement did not receive legislative action was that county officials began to respond to some of the requests of Blowing Rock citizens. A new playground for the school was begun in May, 1937, and several additions were made to the school. From 1937 to 1940, with assistance from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, a six-room addition and a gymnasium were added. Further consolidation also occurred, with schools at Boone Fork, Whiting, Middle Fork, Aho, and Cool Springs consolidating with Blowing Rock.

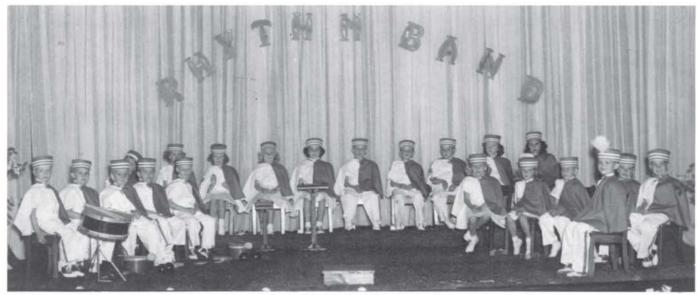
The Second World War created a severe teacher shortage for Blowing Rock and much of the rest of the county. It was difficult to employ certified teachers and the quality of the educational system suffered.⁴⁶ In 1948 the pupil-teacher ratio at Blowing Rock High School was 73 to 3; Blowing Rock Elementary was 269 to 9. Buildings fell into neglect, and sadly, Blowing Rock School lost accreditation. This was perhaps the darkest hour in our community's educational history and it would eventually contribute to the pressure for a countywide secondary consolidation.

The Davant/Angell Era



Dr. Charles Davant, Jr.

In the 1950s, Blowing Rock School was woefully behind the times. Among the problems were nepotism in school appointments, a dilapidated school building, and lack of local involvement and control. Blowing Rock School was considered by many to be a "fire trap" and teachers were employed to teach subjects for which they were not certified. It was substantially through the efforts of two men, Dr. Charles Davant, Jr. and W. Guy Angell, that these problems were confronted and corrected.⁴⁷ Davant was appointed to the Watauga County Board of Education in an unusual procedure which reflected the state of concern of local citizens and educational officials in Raleigh. The controversy centered around W.H. Walker, who had served as Superintendent of the Board of Education for 19 years. Walker had been convicted of drunken driving in 1948 and 1951. Nevertheless, the Board of Education continued to support him.



Blowing Rock School's Rhythm Band

William McElwee, a North Wilkesboro lawyer, represented a group of Watauga County citizens who opposed the retention of Walker. The *Asheville Citizen* reported in 1955 that McElwee alleged "a groundswell of opposition from church people and parents of school children to the current Superintendent and the Board of Education which supports him." The Watauga Democratic Executive Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Board of Education.

On July 7, 1955, the State Board of Education took a highly unusual step. They dismissed the entire Watauga County Board of Education and appointed a new one. Chairman of the new Board was Dr. Charles Davant, Jr. of Blowing Rock. Dr. W.G. Whitener, a professor at Appalachian State Teachers College and W.H. Mast, Jr. of Valle Crucis, completed the new Board.

One of the first actions of the new Board was the appointment of W. Guy Angell as Superintendent. Thus began what would grow into a close personal and professional association between Davant and Angell for over a dozen years. The schools of Blowing Rock and Watauga County would be the beneficiary of their coordinated efforts.

Among the measures taken to improve the schools in Blowing Rock and the county in general were the introduction of monthly fire drills, monthly electrical inspections and repairs, and the institution of a maintenance crew for both schools and school buses.⁴⁸



Participants in a benefit basketball game included (back row, left to right): Grover Robbins, Sr., Jack Sharp, H.P. Holshouser, Sr., Robert Hardin, H.P. Holshouser, Jr., Rathmel Wilson, (front row): unidentified, Ernest Hayes, Bill Williamson, and J.P. Lyons.

But more importantly, under the leadership of Davant and Angell, the Board of Education worked to see that Blowing Rock School regained accreditation. Uncertified teachers were encouraged to return to college in the summer to gain appropriate certification and virtually all of them did so.⁴⁹

James Storie, who was principal at Blowing Rock High School from 1952 to 1959, worked closely with Davant, Angell, and the rest of the Board in implementing a host of improvements. Storie relates that he came to Blowing Rock to take the job because it was "a challenge." 50

Not only had the School lost accreditation, it was also in debt. Clearly, one of the hallmarks of Storie's administration was close



Blowing Rock Elementary School

and constructive relations between the School and the community. Through PTA sponsored events such as bake sales and carnivals, and generous contributions from many of Blowing Rock's seasonal residents, the School was operating in the black by 1955.⁵¹

It was during the mid-50s that Dr. Davant encouraged one of Blowing Rock's most important benefactors, philanthropist and seasonal resident, Anne Cannon Forsyth, to establish college scholarships for deserving Blowing Rock students. Davant felt that scholarships would not only encourage serious student effort in the classroom, but also extend hope for an academic future beyond Blowing Rock High. For a number of years in the 50s, and early 60s, two graduating seniors from Blowing Rock High School received a four-year, all expenses paid scholarship to the college of their choice.⁵² Both Davant and Storie were involved in selecting the meritorious students, and they must have selected well, because the recipients have gone on to successful positions in the academic and business communities of our state and nation.

In 1957 a new Blowing Rock Elementary School was constructed. It was a bright and modern facility which helped relieve the problem of overcrowding which had plagued the earlier facility. The elementary school has since been expanded on three different occasions.

"Book Learning" Moves Into the Modern Age

In 1957, the Soviet Union profoundly influenced Blowing Rock's educational destiny. That was the year the Soviet space satellite 'Sputnik' was launched into orbit around the Earth. The nation was shocked by this dramatic and unexpected advancement in Soviet space technology. Congressional leaders reacted by establishing the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Our nation's scarce educational resources were to be channeled into science and math subject areas which could nurture future scientists and engineers to respond to the new Soviet threat.

Soon after, the Watauga County Board of Education, still chaired by Charles Davant, initiated a comprehensive evaluation of the county's high schools. One area of particular concern was the quality of science and math instruction in the post-Sputnik era. The Board was also fully aware of the national trend toward consolidation of small rural schools and, on December 1, 1958, discussed the possibility of such a system for Watauga. Members were alarmed by



Blowing Rock High School in the 1950s



A sad day-the demolition of Blowing Rock High School

the inequities they discovered in the county high schools. Appalachian was superior to all of the other schools, yet all were behind the times in terms of equipment and course offerings. Davant and the other Board members were dedicated to the principle of equal educational opportunity for all the young people in Watauga.⁵³ During the winter of 1961, after carefully evaluating the quality of all the county's high schools, the Board of Education made a decision to push for consolidation. Under the plan, Blowing Rock, Appalachian, Bethel and Cove Creek would become Watauga High School. The plan was endorsed by local government authorities on February 9, 1962, and a bond referendum in the amount of \$1,630,000 was overwhelmingly approved by the county voters on September 17, 1963. The new school was to be located in Boone on a forty acre site costing just under \$40,000. Construction was completed in time for the beginning of the 1965 school year.⁵⁴

The new high school contained 133,000 square feet of instructional space at a cost of \$11.90 per square foot. Among the significant features were comprehensive vocational education facilities, five science lab-classrooms, a spacious library, state-of-the-art foreign language labs, and modern athletic facilities.⁵⁵

Only four years had elapsed since the Board first discussed the possibility of high school consolidation. Quite an accomplishment for a state-appointed Board of Education and especially for its young Chairman, Dr. Charles Davant and for Superintendent Guy Angell. In four short years, educational opportunities had changed dramatically for Blowing Rock youth.

The improvement was most dramatic in science and math education with a host of elective courses now available. But increased choice was now a reality not only for college-bound students but also for those interested in a vocation. In 1969 the vocational department was expanded to include cosmetology. Other vocational subjects, in addition to the traditional business education courses, home economics, and agriculture, included introduction to data processing, horticulture, crafts, health careers, child care, and bachelor living. Welding, auto mechanics, electrical training, and new work/study curricula helped give Blowing Rock students a vocational head start. A variety of athletic, music, and art programs were also available for the first time.

But for all its advantages, consolidation left a void in the social and civic life of Blowing Rock. The new high school was located in Boone and to many citizens this was simply adding insult to injury. Not only was Blowing Rock High School gone, but our young people would now be bused to long-time rival, Boone. There were deep-seated beliefs that Boone had always tried to dominate the rest of the county. Now the Village had lost the High School and all of the athletic, social, and civic events that were part of it. These were activities that simply could not be shifted to the

elementary school. Ultimately, for the town, the cost of enhanced educational opportunity was a corresponding loss of community involvement at the high school level. Nationwide studies by educational researchers and social scientists since the 60s have revealed that Blowing Rock's loss was not unique or uncommon. Many small, rural communities expressed feelings of sadness and loss as a result of school consolidation. These schools often represented the primary gathering place for adults and students. The "sense of community" which is such an important element of rural life in America, was deeply shaken. Fortunately, those same studies note that, like Blowing Rock, rural communities in America are resilient. Alternative places for social, athletic, and civic gatherings emerge. That has certainly been the case in Blowing Rock, and gradually our citizens have come to view Watauga High School as an extension of our community.



David Greene

Today, Blowing Rock Elementary School is a product of the reform movement begun by Davant and Angell in the 50s. Children are taught by excellent teachers, with a varied curriculum and the latest technology to enhance their experience. School Superintendent David Greene, a Blowing Rock native, brings dedication and commitment to the position. Parents and the community at large recognize that the future rests with children. Education is a community priority, a heritage derived from the earliest days of Skyland Institute and Miss Emily Prudden.

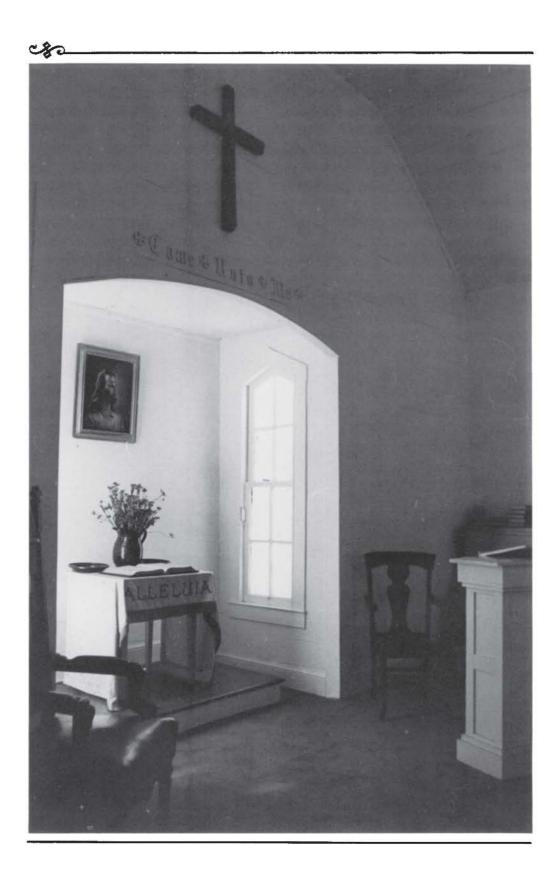


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CHAPTER VI

Our Religious Heritage

Although it is common to speak of the origins of a community's religious life as the preachings of an eminent minister or the founding of a specific church, such is not the case in Blowing Rock. Our religious roots can be traced to a first death, a grave, and thoughts of the afterlife.

The story begins with the Greene family, who became Blowing Rock's first settlers in the 1790s. On their arduous trek to the Green Park area from the Jersey Settlement in Rowan County, North Carolina, they were accompanied by Revolutionary War veteran Ed Sullivan. He was the father-in-law of Richard Greene, eldest brother of the Greene family. Sullivan arrived fully aware of his own mortality. He brought with him on his trip up the mountains his own tombstone. He was ill and did not want to be buried in the wilderness in an unmarked grave. Shortly after arriving in Blowing Rock, in 1794, Sullivan died. A coffin was hewn for him from a large poplar tree and the tombstone he had carried on his journey, now inscribed "EES 1794," was placed in Blowing Rock soil on February 27th. While Sullivan's religious preference is not known, the graveyard which was established at that time has since become part of the Mount Bethel Reformed Church on Goforth Road. The town's first known grave and tombstone can still be viewed there today.

Fortunately, we do know more about the religious beliefs and practices of those who followed the early settlers to Blowing Rock. Yet our religious history is complex and varies from the rest of Watauga because of the seasonal variations in our population. While our early history reflects that which has existed throughout much of the rest of the Southern Highlands, the picture changes dramatically as we became a seasonal resort.

According to historian Horace Kephart, the mountaineer was intensely Protestant and represented the only man in the world whom the Catholic Church made little or no effort to proselytize. The first settlers in Appalachia were mainly Presbyterians, as became Scotch-Irishmen, but they fell away from that faith, partly because the wilderness was too poor to support a regular ministry and partly because it was too democratic for Calvinism, with its supreme authority vested in the clergy. While the mountaineer still retains a passion for hair-splitting arguments over points of doctrine, the ancestral creed has been largely forgotten. The circuit rider, whether Methodist or Baptist, found here a field ripe for his harvest. Being himself self-supporting and unassuming, he easily won the confidence of the people. He preached a highly emotional religion that worked his audience into ecstasy and he introduced a mighty agent of evangelization among outdoor folk when he started the camp-meeting.²

Presbyterianism was not destined to be the popular creed in Watauga. Other sects, still more democratic, still more in keeping with backwoods life and thought, largely supplanted it. Methodism did not become a power until after the close of the Revolution, but the Baptists followed close on the heels of the Presbyterians. They, too, soon built log meeting-houses here and there, while their preachers cleared the forests and hunted elk and buffalo, like other pioneer settlers. To all the churches, the preachers and congregation alike went armed, the latter leaning their rifles in their pews or near their seats while the pastor let his stand beside the pulpit.³

The religion of choice for most early mountain settlers



The tombstone of Ed Sullivan

was the Baptist faith. Communication was difficult in the Appalachian back country, and churches which relied on formally trained ministers and a hierarchical clergy were at a disadvantage. The Methodists, and to a greater extent the Baptists, sponsored circuit-riding preachers to reach remote mountain communities. The earliest revivals were held by these men, who would stay for a few days or weeks to preach, baptize, marry, and bury the faithful before riding on. Baptists could be ordained to preach by the smallest of congregations based on a personal study of the Bible and a desire to spread the Gospel. They were plain men, accessible to other plain men, and their dominance should come as no surprise.

To a great extent, the early history of religious life in Blowing Rock can be seen through the juxtaposition of mountain Baptists and "cottager" Presbyterians and Episcopalians. The degree of understanding, cooperation and tolerance which was achieved is especially noteworthy when one considers that most non-Baptist churches were founded in Blowing Rock with a strong missionary impulse. The first Sunday School was begun in Morris' school house in 1884 by the Reformed minister Rev. John Ingle, who had been authorized by his superiors to organize a congregation to be known as the "Watauga Mission." The Presbyterian Church arrived largely as a result of efforts of summer resident Mrs. Alfred M. Stewart, who wrote in her fund-raising letters to those "who live in more favored parts of our land" of the "widespread religious destitution in Watauga County." The Blowing Rock Episcopal Church, in the same church jurisdiction as the Valle Crucis Mission School, emphasized their educational mission in the Village by helping to found the first public library. The Skyland Institute, although non-sectarian, was begun by a New England Presbyterian, Emily C. Prudden, on property deeded to the American Missionary Association.

It would have been understandable if the local populace had reacted to these missionary efforts with hostility. How dare these outsiders tell them that they were not good Christians! Instead, the friendships engendered by a small town led to a situation which may have been unique in Christendom. The four main churches — the First Baptist, the Presbyterian, the Episcopalian, and the Methodist — agreed to share their services during the summer months when all were open. The first Sunday of each month, all would attend Episcopalian services. The second Sunday was Methodist, the third, Baptist, and the fourth, Presbyterian. If a Sunday remained, a special fifth Sunday service was held with an expanded program.⁷ Mrs. T.H. Coffey held the distinction for many years of being organist at four different churches, with never a schedule conflict.⁸

Mary Nelson Carter has left the earliest pictures of the contrast between "old" and "new" religion in her lightly fictionalized account of life in Blowing Rock in the 1890s. A native friend, "Bina," first provides her with an insight into riverside baptisms:

A Preacher Jenks lives nigh on to fifteen miles from here, and it's too fur for him to bring his baptizin' clothes along. He always stays 'long o' we-uns, and pop favorin' him in size, he always borrows his clothes to baptize in. Of course I have 'em all to wash every time, and branch mud's mighty hard wash to out. The reason them Jasper gals didn't come last time were that they's bound they'd wait till they could git white cotton gownds to be baptized in. Why, they'll show the very print o' their figgers.! T'ain't 'spectable. Decent women folks always wears black wool gownds pinned down tight to their stockings. Even then, it makes you feel right queer to come up out o' the water with the fellers standin' on the bank sniggerin.'10

Mrs. Carter then relates an account of what must have been one of the first "cross-cultural" wedding services to take place in Blowing Rock. "I had already heard," she says, "that a young couple among the summer boarders had decided to have a quiet wedding in the Village church before leaving the mountain." Her friend fills her in on the details:

'There were a big talk first-off', resumed Bina, 'agin their usin' the church for a wedding. Some on 'em reckoned it weren't right to open it week-days, nohow, lest it were for preachin', or maybe a funeral. Some on 'em's got mighty old-fashioned idees. They allowed as how such goins' on as weddins' wasn't religion. Mr. Sanders got right mad. He asked 'em what they done took him and Miss Petersen for, anyhow. He said if there were anythin' solemner or more religious than gettin' married, he'd thank 'em to tell him what it were. That settled it. He's a mighty nice young man. Him and her's took right smart interest in the Sunday-school this summer, and they didn't want to rile him'...

'You never see nothin' so pretty as the way the church were fixed. It were all green branches nigh the pulpit, with posies stuck in among 'em everywheres. And don't you think', said she, waxing enthusiastic, 'right over where they stood when the preacher were a-marryin' 'em were a big thing — looked like a bell — made out of daises and sich. It were all white.'

'And what of the bride?' I asked.

'Well, she weren't much pretty to look at, but I wisht you could 'a seen her gownd!' replied Bina. 'It were all white silk, and dragged on the floor away behind her. They had to lay down things for her to walk over after all the folks was in. Her neck were all bare, though. It made me feel right queer, but some on 'em said they'd seen boarder ladies dressed that way before.' ...'She had on a long white veil hangin' down her back that covered her up a little, and you never seen sich gloves as she had on! T'other boarder young ladies, them as showed folks where to set, had on the same kind. They had white shoes, too, white dresses, and bunches o' flowers in their hands. They looked right pretty.'

'Two young men was a-standin' by the door all the time. One of 'em took folks' tickets, and t'other kept sweepin' out the mud. It rained right smart last night. All the boarder folks came in carriages, but there were a sight o' mud.' I inquired if there was any music.

'Yes', was the reply; 'a boarder lady played a kind of dance tune on the organ for 'em to step to when they was a comin' in and goin' out. I ain't right sure I liked that part in church.'

'Why not Bina?' I asked. 'Don't you think the Lord likes cheerful music?'

'Well, Preacher Smith allows as no music but psalm singin' ain't right, nohow,' she answered. 'He can't abide the very name of dancin!'

'But they didn't dance at the wedding, did they?' I inquired.

'Not exactly,' replied Bina slowly; 'but they done kept step to the music, and Preacher Smith allows as how that's nigh about as bad as dancin.'

A small town containing people of such widely divergent backgrounds was bound to hear occasional grumbling, of course. The Rev. William Savage, Episcopal minister in Blowing Rock from 1902-1917, could be particularly voluble. He worked diligently to "uplift" the mountaineer, and was instrumental in founding a library, village craft exchange, and mail-order craft and galax businesses for the betterment of community and church. He could also become annoyed easily over what he interpreted as the lack of receptivity of some villagers to the benefits of church attendance. In 1915, he wrote, "our village people, with rare exceptions, do not go to church in summer, especially in the morning. Why is it? Because they think themselves too good to worship along side the gay summerer or not good enough — I wonder which?" But that winter saw him just as frustrated over attendance when the summer folk were gone. He reported in January, 1916, "It is a fact that the people of this town are poor church goers, thirty heads of families by actual count habitually absenting themselves from all religious services, not 30 couples but 30 fathers, thus not only setting to their growing boys an unfortunate example but doing the cause of 'spiritual uplift' an incalculable harm. The church bells ring every Sunday, but not more than 60 people, on an average, of the 300 inhabitants

attending (sic.) church regularly, and many of them not at all, showing that these people have enough religion or want none at all."12

Part of Savage's frustrations may have been due to the relatively small inroads his (and other) non-Baptist churches made among Blowing Rock natives, especially those living and working outside of the Village proper. He found but two church communicants when he arrived, and despite strenuous efforts, had managed to raise that total by only one per year (to 18) when he left.¹³

His lack of success should be seen as a commentary on the people's satisfaction with the religion which they already had, and not as a negative reflection on his own efforts. Blowing Rock natives were used to a religion which grudgingly accepted moderate church attendance (higher



The Reverend William Savage in front of The Randall Memorial Workshop

among women) on a regular basis, punctuated by intensive revivals which sought to reunite — at least temporarily — the entire community in the religious fold. Savage recognized the importance of these interludes in the Village's normal life. His reports on a revival sponsored by the First Baptist Church under minister J.M. Payne in late January and early February, 1913, demonstrate the power religion could yield:

"Since Brother Payne's big meeting closed, the local societies have resumed work. During the meeting the worldly side of our community, like the ground hog which saw its shadow, went into hiding; stores closed, machinery stopped, mills shut down." ¹⁴

"So earnest are the people in the matter of religion that when a revival is held in the neighborhood the teachers close the school during the morning hours for service and head a long procession of children to the church door, in some cases impelling them to attend by good naturedly 'promising a whipping' if they did not. Such zeal for religious training is seldom, if ever, heard of outside the hill country." ¹⁵

The stongly Baptist bent of most year-round Blowing Rock citizens continued for some time. Schools still closed early to promote revival attendance until at least 1928. Ed Robbins, mayor in 1914-1915, was ordained a Baptist minister in 1920 and went on to serve again as mayor from 1921-23. When a citizens' Law Enforcement League was formed in 1922 to help combat the illegal liquor trade, it was as an outgrowth of a mass meeting sponsored by the First Baptist Church. When the alcohol question arose again after World War II, the Rev. W.C. Payne of the First Baptist Church was appointed as Blowing Rock's representative to the anti-liquor Allied Church League. The Baptist Church took the lead here, as might be expected of the church most representative of the more socially conservative Blowing Rock natives. The summer rotating services schedule, however, worked to encourage a town consensus on such issues as alcohol sales, with the major difference being in degree of emphasis.

The growth of Blowing Rock has also meant a growth in the number of churches and services. Ironically, this growth has diluted somewhat the cohesive power of religion in the town. Since the 1950s several congregations have been large enough to hold separate services, in most cases year-round. Christian beliefs are still an integral part of the value system of most of the town's citizens, but the days of social solidarity centered on shared church attendance have passed.²⁰

Blowing Rock Negro Community Church

Religious and social life were Rock's black summer population. throughout most of the Village's throughout the rest of the country. had a small year-round black farmers and town workers. that number; until after World one resident black family.²¹ servants and service industry the tourist season on a regular movement of the 1950s and 1960s southern black-white servant-1960s, Blowing Rock has become a rare black home to break the

Blacks did not attend church or townspeople. The earliest although blacks could have



The Blowing Rock Negro Community Center and Church (today the First Independent Baptist Church)

strongly intertwined for Blowing Both were also strictly segregated first hundred years, as was the case

About 1900, Blowing Rock community, including both Outward migration slowly reduced War II there was apparently just Several hundred black house workers lived in the Village during basis until the Civil Rights saw a dramatic reduction of the master tradition. Since the late nearly completely white, with only pattern.

services with their white employers reported services were held in 1919, worshipped at Boone's black

Methodist Church (constructed in 1898) or in private groups locally.²² In August, 1919, it was reported that "Some colored people from Lenoir held services in the streets of Blowing Rock, and also in front of Green Park Hotel last Sunday. Sunday night they held services in Skyland Institute. These services were well attended, crowds of white people coming in order to hear the Negroes sing."²³

By the 1930s, services were being held in the Sunday school room at the Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church in

late evening, after white activities had been accommodated. Preachers were drawn from the members themselves, and supplemented by visiting ministers from nearby congregations.²⁴

By the 1940s, this system was no longer considered adequate by members of either race. Life was still strictly segregated, however, with the Yonahlossee Theatre providing separate "colored seating" in the balcony. ²⁵ Blacks could work as indoor help at the Country Club, but were not allowed to serve as caddies. Black hotel employees had separate living quarters on the hotel grounds, with the most elaborate being at the Mayview Manor. Blowing Rock's Main Street barber shop refused to cut Negro hair, and a black barber came to the Mayview from Lenoir on a weekly basis for that purpose. ²⁶ A single black club, the Tin Top, provided some recreation but also allowed drinking, dancing, and gambling. It was in everyone's interest to provide an alternative for black fellowship and recreation. A fund drive was undertaken in 1948 to secure a lot for a separate facility. The initial board of trustees for the Blowing Rock Colored Church Project was composed of seven of the town's most prominent (white) citizens: Mrs. Joseph F. Cannon, Mrs. Julius Cone, Grover C. Robbins, Sr., C.G. Beck, J. Luther Snyder, David Ovens, and C.H. Berryman. When the church was officially established, black members were added to the board. The initial board announced that, "It is thought that the church will seat approximately 150 people, and that there will be in connection therewith a beauty parlor, barber shop, and kitchen facilities. It is proposed that limited supervised social activities will be carried on in the church." ²⁷

The Blowing Rock Negro Community Church, located on Possum Hollow Road, was officially incorporated on September 6, 1949. Ministers from the Village's white churches took turns preaching most Sundays, with an occasional guest minister. The facilities were also used for socials, primarily on Thursday afternoon or evening and Sundays, the servants' days off.

About 1960, Mocksville native and summer resident Eugene S. Bowman was asked to preach regularly at the Church by representatives from Rumple, to avoid the additional burden on the town ministers. He alone handled this duty until 1980. By that time the congregation had shrunk to less than ten old-timers, and it was decided to close the church. After two vacant years, the buildings returned to religious use in 1982 when the First Independent Baptist Church moved their services there.²⁸

Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church

The construction of a Presbyterian Mission Church in Blowing Rock can be traced to the efforts of three summer residents of the 1880s: Mrs. Alfred M. Stewart of Davidson, who apparently also kept summer boarders, William I. Martin, a college professor from Davidson, and the Rev. Dr. Jethro Rumple, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Salisbury. A fundraising drive, begun in 1882, had progressed sufficiently by 1885 that the Concord Presbytery approved construction under their auspices. W.M. Morris, the boarding house keeper and merchant, donated land for the building. On July 26, 1886, the Church was officially dedicated with Dr. Rumple preaching the first sermon.



The original small frame Church was struck by lightning in May, 1888, and severely damaged.²⁹ Although it remained in use, church leaders decided that it should be replaced by a larger stone building. Construction was begun on the new Church in 1905 and completed in 1912.

The stone arch above the pulpit was erected in the summer of 1906, and carries with it a humorous story. Dr. Martin, who was active in raising funds for the new building, recalled that he gave orders that the rock for the arch and the pulpit furniture be carefully selected. When the stone was placed on the ground for his approval, he noticed



Rumple Cottage in 1898

that some of it was stained. He inquired of the man who hauled it as to the source of the rock, and was told that if the truth were known it would not be used. On being pressed for additional information he confessed he had taken it from the chimney of an abandoned moonshine-still. In the spirit of forgiveness, the rock was used in both the arch and the pulpit, glorifying the God who created these oldest of mountains, of which the rock was a part.

Dr. Rumple died during the first year of construction of the new Church, and his Salisbury Sunday school class donated a stone marker with the inscription 'Rumple Memorial' on it to the Blowing Rock congregation. Inspired by the gesture and appreciative of Dr. Rumple's inspiring work, the Church was officially renamed 'Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church' in 1940, in his honor.

Ironically, another of Blowing Rock's most influential religious leaders was never a pastor here. Tennesseean Dr. James I. Vance first came to Blowing Rock in 1901 so that he could enjoy the cool climate and his love of horseback riding. He built a summer home directly across from the entrance to the Cone



The Reverend Dr. Jethro Rumple

Estate on the Yonahlossee Road. He rode daily, except for the Sabbath, with his daughters Ruth and Margaret. Long-time summer resident Gwyn Harper, Jr., remembers Vance: "I'm sure anyone living in Blowing Rock at the time will never forget Dr. Vance. He was an inspiring man of God whose sermons brought tears to the eyes of many. He delivered some powerful sermons which attracted overflow crowds to Rumple Memorial." The crowds were often so large that loudspeakers were placed outside the church so that Vance could reach those seated on the lawn and in automobiles on Main Street.

Much of Rumple Memorial's history is tied to the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church and the work of the energetic Rev. Edgar Tufts. The Rev. Mr. Tufts preached once a month in Blowing Rock, and helped establish the Grandfather Home for Children as the primary charity supported by the congregation. The practice of taking up collections for the Home was enlarged greatly by Mr. David Ovens during the 1930s, 40s, and early 50s. He brought talented performers from the New York Metropolitan Opera Company to Blowing Rock for benefit concerts which became one



Reverend Edgar Tufts



Participants in the 1946 Grandfather Home Day Festivities (left to right): Anne Bryan, Rev. Dr. Walter Keys, Dr. W.T. Tate, Stuart Ross, Jean Wilson and Mac Morgan. The three children were orphans from Grandfather Home.



"Burning The Note" ceremonies at Rumple Memorial

of the highlights of the summer social scene. These concerts brought in as much as \$10,000 at a time, providing up to one-third of the Grandfather Home for Children's annual operating budget.

A manse was built in 1931 in hopes of attracting a permanent minister to Blowing Rock. The Rev. G. Sexton Buchanon became the Village's first full-time minister, living in the manse with his family until 1938. The Rev. Walter Keys, Home Mission Supervisor for the Holston Presbytery, was active in the congregation from the 1920s and became minister from 1940-48. Keys quickly became prominent in the home-front war effort. He served on the local rationing board and sent monthly letters to all Blowing Rock citizens in service.

After Mr. Keys' temporary retirement, the Church had several ministers for short periods of time. Lay leadership had always been strong, however, and the Church continued to prosper. Annie (Mrs. Joseph) Cannon was a notable supporter during this time. She not only gave financial aid behind the scenes, but was highly regarded as a religious teacher.

The post-War years, with the rapid growth of resort communities on the outskirts of Blowing Rock and the more transient summer community, have presented the Church with new challenges. A Summer Residents' Committee was begun in 1962 to address the issue of integrating such people into the regular congregation. The Church's centennial in 1987 saw it looking eagerly to the future, ready to continue its service to the people of the mountains.³⁰

Annie Ludlow Cannon - The Master Teacher



Annie Ludlow Cannon

Charitable, loving, patient. These are among the words used most often to describe a truly remarkable woman, Annie Ludlow Cannon. She was a master teacher who dedicated her life to religious studies and to helping the less fortunate. Through her Good News Bible Club and Sunday school work, she not only taught the Bible to thousands of children and adults in Blowing Rock, she conveyed a spirit of love and good will which indelibly shaped all who knew her.

Born on December 9, 1887, to Dr. Jacob Lot Ludlow, a Pennsylvania civil engineer and his wife Myra, she and two sisters grew up in Winston-Salem.³² She received a liberal arts degree from Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, Georgia, and returned to her hometown after graduation.

One spring day, while riding on a local passenger train, she met the man of her dreams in young, dashing Joseph Franklin Cannon.³² Joseph was the son of J.W. Cannon, a native of Concord and one of the leaders of the Cannon Textile Industry.

The future of our small community was forever enhanced when Joseph and Annie Cannon built a summer home in Mayview Park in 1927. They called the home "Miramichi," meaning happy retreat and indeed this beautiful home soon became a joyous gathering place for friends and family.³³ Shortly after Miramichi was built, Annie began hosting Sunday evening hymn singings

which were open to everyone in the community. Held in the warm, loving atmosphere of the Cannon home, these gatherings celebrated music and the Sabbath and fulfilled the religious and spiritual needs of those who attended. The singings also provided a much needed form of entertainment for the community because there were no theatres, skating rinks, or shopping malls.³⁴ On many occasions, the great living room at Miramichi was filled, with singers also in the balcony, library, and on the porch. In later years, a hymn written by Professor H.E. Spence and dedicated to Mrs. Cannon was used to close the gatherings. It was entitled, "Hymn to Miramichi." When the local churches began holding their own Sunday evening religious services, Mrs. Cannon discontinued the singings, but they will long be fondly remembered and cherished by those who participated.³⁶

Annie Cannon was dedicated to the improvement of life in Blowing Rock. During the 1930s, she was instrumental in starting the Blowing Rock Community Club. Both she and Mr. Cannon were loyal supporters of Grandfather Home for Children, where buildings are named in their honor.³⁷ She unselfishly gave her time and money to charitable organizations, but she will perhaps be remembered most fondly as the Sunday school teacher whose life exemplified the teachings of Christ.

It was while teaching Bible class at the First Presbyterian Church of Concord in 1917 that Mrs. Cannon first became associated with the Good News Bible Club, which focused on religious instruction for children. This proved to be a union of kindred spirits because she had never forgotten the profound influence Bible stories had on her as a child. She dedicated her teaching to the children of Blowing Rock.³⁸

Her talent and gift for teaching were obvious and she soon gained recognition as a master teacher from the Child Evangelism Fellowship.³⁹ Anyone who ever attended one of her classes knows that this recognition was justly bestowed. She was once asked where she received her training and instruction. She responded, "I have the very same teacher you have, the Holy Spirit."

Mrs. Cannon's teaching involved the use of "Scene-a-felts," a method by which felt figures were placed on a flannel board as a Bible story was told. She had seen an advertisement for this instructional aid in the paper and sent five dollars for a trial kit. When they arrived in the mail a few weeks later, they were so beautiful she sat down and cried. Each scene, done in a variety of colors using oil paint, conveyed the beauty and wonder of the Bible. Eventually, she purchased thousands of dollars worth of felt scenes and soon acquired enough to teach from *Genesis* through *Revelations*.⁴¹

Her method of teaching was intriguing and captured the attention of the children. As she told a story from the

Bible, she placed a felt scene on the large flannel board which was supported by an easel. She began with the sky and clouds and gradually, as the story unfolded, added a new character to the board. At the end of the story, the flannel board reflected a true mosaic. The children were in awe of the stories and the wonderful woman who shared

Annie Cannon did not restrict her teaching to children or to the once-a-week Good News Bible Club. She also took her stories to Camp Sky Ranch for crippled children, the Hebron Colony for alcoholic men, and the Grace Colony for alcoholic women.⁴² In addition, she asked and was granted permission to visit every school in Watauga County to illustrate a Bible story with her felt pictures. Determined to introduce Christ and his teachings to all local children, in 1948 she gave a Voss Bible Story Book to each school room in Watauga, Ashe, Avery, and Wilkes Counties. 43 She also taught at various institutions throughout Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. At the age of 75, after nearly 60 years of teaching, she discontinued the Good News Bible Club. But she did not give up her ministry. She taught others how to use the Scene-a-felt collection and these "pupils" carried on the tradition which she had begun.44

Mrs. Cannon's love and concern for others was very genuine. She appreciated life's simple blessings and never tired of the Blue Ridge Mountains, with their majestic and mystic qualities.

Her magnificent home, "Miramichi," was situated on a peak overlooking the John's River Gorge so that she could enjoy the spectacular view these mountains afforded. As one might expect, she loved flowers and spent hours in the beautiful gardens at Miramichi. She also enjoyed horseback riding and was an accomplished equestrian into her 70s. She believed in the importance of "community" and supported the town's carnivals, parades, and Horse Show. In the words of Professor Spence, "She was not only an established leader in the social life of Blowing Rock, but she was a force in every civic and moral cause which was enterprised in the community."

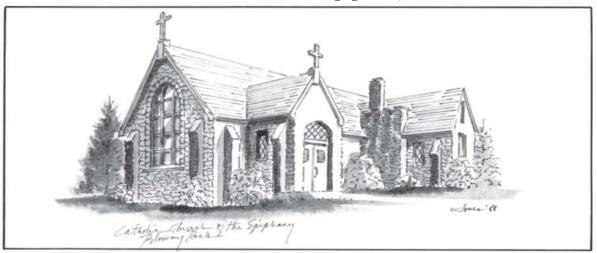
Annie Cannon was friend to everyone in Blowing Rock. She was loved by both local and seasonal residents. Her greatest gift was the example she set for all with whom she came in contact. She died in her beloved Blowing Rock on March 10, 1965. In 1970, the new education building at Rumple Memorial Church was dedicated in her honor.



Mrs. Cannon on "Silver Slippers" for a parade in 1942

The master teacher at work with her "Scene-a-felts'

Church of the Epiphany



Blowing Rock's Catholic community grew slowly during the first fifty years of the Village's existence. The Franciscan Fathers of Lenoir provided the first services for their mountain brethren, offering up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for summer residents beginning June 18, 1933. T.H. Broyhill allowed the use of the Mayview Manor Lodge for Mass from that time until the Lodge's conversion into a game room in 1947. Services were then moved to the Yonahlossee Theatre while construction of the Church of the Epiphany was planned and undertaken. Mr. R.H. Gore of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, donated property near the Blowing Rock Golf Course on Galax Road and the Franciscans led a fund drive for the building, which was completed in 1948. Father Ildefonse, pastor of St. Francis Church in Lenoir, led the first services in the new Church in June, 1948. Shortly after its completion, however, the Church's local affiliation changed. Although supported heavily by the Lenoir Franciscans, it opened officially as a mission of North Wilkesboro. Within a year, it was transferred to the new parish of St. Elizabeth in Boone, under Father Ed Smith of the Glenmary Fathers. The Church of the Epiphany has remained primarily a place of worship for summer residents and visitors, enabling Catholics to give praise to God though far from their home churches.⁴⁵

Christian Science Church



The Christian Science movement in Blowing Rock began in the 1930s with a small group of summer residents. These people made arrangements to use the closed Methodist Church on Main Street for their services. The building was leased and repaired by the Christian Science community. Their efforts to maintain the structure were so successful that at the end of the lease period, the Methodists reoccupied and reopened the church building themselves.

Services were then held at the homes of individual members, but a new church had become a priority. In 1954, Mr. Ralph Horton, the developer of Echo Park, donated land for the building and a small white church was built, with first services held in June, 1955.

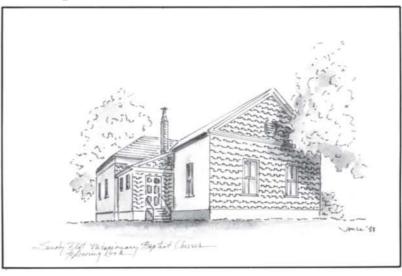
The church began as a summer place of worship, open from June to September, but has grown and prospered. The building was completely winterized in 1967, and opened for

year-round attendance in 1976. Music is frequently provided by the Farm House Singers of Blowing Rock. An important part of the facility is the Christian Science Reading Room, where practitioners of all faiths are welcome and encouraged to familiarize themselves with church literature and the Christian Science faith.

Sandy Flat Baptist Church

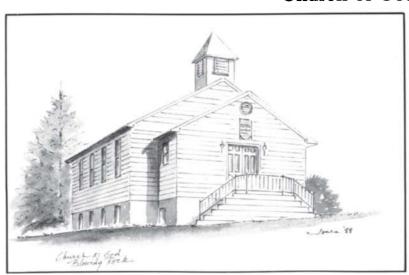
The Sandy Flat Baptist Church had its origin as a schoolhouse constructed by Moses H. Cone to ensure education for the children of employees and neighbors of his Estate. Mr. Paul Harmon was the first teacher, handling grades one through seven. Half his salary was paid by Moses Cone and half by the county. When a second teacher was added, Mr. Cone paid one salary and the county the other. The school operated for approximately twenty years before being consolidated into the town system in the 1920s. It had an enrollment of about forty students.

When the school was closed, Mrs. Cone was asked to allow it to be used as a church.



She agreed, and under the leadership of Pastor Ed Robbins, former mayor of Blowing Rock, the building was renovated, electricity installed, and the Church opened for services in June, 1928. The original congregation had forty-three members, again largely neighbors or employees of the Cone Estate. When Mrs. Cone died, the Estate passed ultimately to the National Park Service, but the church remained under congregational control and has continued to provide a place of worship and community for residents of the Sandy Flat area.⁴⁶

Church of God



The Blowing Rock Church of God is a member of the national Church of God, one of the country's oldest pentecostal denominations with headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee. Locally, the church springs from a congregation which worshipped in the old Skyland Institute church facility. These people wished to organize their own church, and were donated land by Esther Ransom for that purpose. They built a church and worshipped as a Freewill Baptist Church from 1920-1948. At that time, the congregation decided to affiliate with the Church of God.

The Church of God Declaration of Faith believes in the Bible as the inerrant word of

God, in salvation and eternal life because of the crucifixion and resurrection, in full immersion baptism, the presence of the Spirit made manifest in speaking in tongues, in footwashing and the Lord's supper (communion), and in the premillenial second coming of Jesus and bodily resurrection. The Pitts family have been mainstays of the local Church. The Rev. Alfred Pitts was first pastor in 1948, and Geraldine Pitts, a member of the congregation, has written a column of quiet inspiration and faith for *The Blowing Rocket* for many years. Financial support for the work of the Church has been provided in part by parish women who baked and sold their famous fried pies to workers in the Blowing Rock community.⁴⁷

Blowing Rock Methodist Church



The Blowing Rock Methodist Church has a history dating back to the turn-of-the-century. In 1900, Charles and Marie Walker deeded a plot of land to the Methodist Episcopal Church South for the erection of a sanctuary. The simple edifice was built with chestnut bark siding, and furnished with twenty-four straight-backed wooden benches. It was serviced by a combination of local and circuit-riding ministers until 1932, when it was closed due to declining membership. The building was abandoned for several years, until it was leased to the Christian Scientists in the 1940s.

An attempt was made to reopen the Church as a Methodist worship place in 1947, but services were only intermittent that year. In 1948, Dr. H.E. Spence of Duke University agreed to serve as a summer minister and held that position until he retired sixteen years later in 1964.

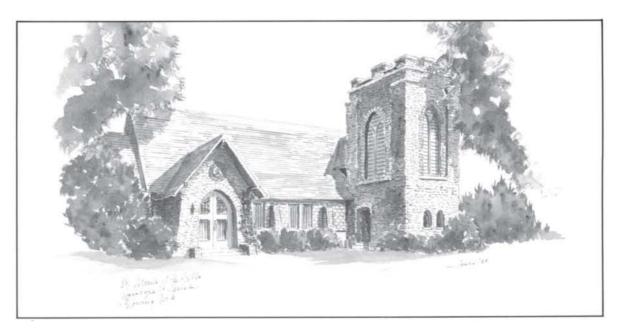
The Methodist Church in Blowing Rock, while not large, has played an important part in the Village's life since its early days as the home of the rotating weekly services. One notable speaker who frequented the church was Rabbi Lazaran. The small building would overflow with visitors for his dynamic talks. The historic building continues to provide a place of worship for visitors and local residents.⁴⁸



50th Anniversary Pageant of the Blowing Rock Methodist Church at Yonahlossee Theatre, August 27, 1950

St. Mary's of the Hills Episcopal Church

The first Episcopal Church in Blowing Rock was a frame building with a bell tower built about 1890. It was a result of a fund drive undertaken by summer residents with the support of St. James' Church in Lenoir. Originally the Church of the Holy Spirit, the name was changed to St. Mary's of the Hills in 1918. Watauga County Episcopal efforts were initially centered at the mission in Valle Crucis, and during the 1890s Blowing Rock Episcopalians were viewed as "a mission of a mission." This changed dramatically in 1902 with the arrival of the Rev. William Rutherford Savage. Although responsible for the Valle Crucis Mission, he delegated much of that responsibility and chose to live in Blowing Rock.⁴⁹

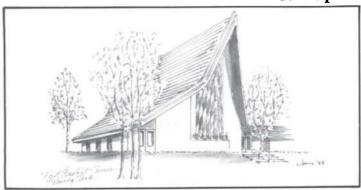


During Savage's tenure, 1902-1917, the Episcopal mission was extraordinarily active. He helped organize the first public library with the aid of Mary Nelson Carter. He became a major wholesaler of galax leaves, advertising in *Southern Churchman* magazine and even supplying decorations for the inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt. He also helped area residents sell handmade craft items through the mail to northern outlets, and organized the Randall Memorial Craft Center as a local training and distribution shop.⁵⁰

The current Church building was begun at about the time that Savage was transferred from Watauga County.⁵¹ It was financed by a generous contribution from W.W. Stringfellow, the wealthy Alabaman who owned Chetola Estate. Lula Gragg, whose father was a friend of Stringfellow's, recalls that he originally made the donation in gratitude for his having missed the sailing of the Titanic.⁵² The cornerstone of the church was laid in 1918, and the construction completed in 1921. In 1920, Stringfellow's beloved wife Susie died. A plaque dedicating the church to the glory of God and the memory of Susie Parker Stringfellow was placed in the nave of the church.

Shortly thereafter, noted artist Elliott Daingerfield painted and donated his memorable 'Madonna of the Hills' to the Church. In honor of the painting, the Church is now known as St. Mary's of the Hills. The painting won the prestigious Clark Prize, awarded for the best figure composition by the National Academy of Design in New York. Services were held only during the summer months until 1951, when the Rev. Thomas Seitz became the first official year-round pastor. (Savage had lived in Blowing Rock year-round, but his duties covered areas throughout Watauga County.) The continuous growth of the congregation led to a significant milestone in 1964. That year, St. Mary's 'graduated' from the status of a diocese-supported mission to that of a self-sustaining church, making contributions of its own back to the diocese for missions elsewhere. The Blowing Rock congregation, which can be justifiably proud of the support it has given the Village for over a century, can now also take pride in over a quarter century of support for their parent church organization.⁵³

First Baptist Church



The First Baptist Church was organized on July 11, 1903, in the Blowing Rock Public School House with twelve charter members: Mrs. Emma Greene, Mrs. Sallie Hodges, Mrs. Jane Benefield, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson Brown, Mrs. Artie Peoples, Mr. J.M. Hodges, Mrs. Exie Lentz, Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Greene, Mrs.John Edmisten, and Mr. J.A. Edmisten. The first pastor was J.W. Thomas of Lenoir, a long-time summer visitor. 54

The first church house was erected in 1905 on



Main Street, near the intersection with the Yonahlossee Road. It stood under a big maple tree, to which horses were hitched during services. A larger building was constructed on the same lot in 1923 in order to accommodate the large congregation. It was formally dedicated in 1924 when the bank note was paid. This new building was constructed in a circle, with the pulpit and pews in the center, surrounded by small rooms on the outside. These rooms were used for Sunday school classes and other small group meetings. In the chilly winter they could be closed off to save heat. In summertime, if a large crowd attended,

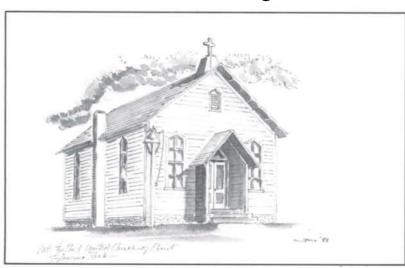
the rooms could be opened up to face the minister and enlarge congregational seating.⁵⁶ Continued growth led to construction of a yet larger church in 1968.

This newest Baptist Church building, located on Sunset Drive, was planned and constructed under the guidance of the Rev. George Hyler. The sanctuary seats 360, Broyhill Chapel, 160, and the educational facility, which provides both Sunday school and summer programs, 200. A note-burning ceremony for the Church was held on July 10, 1983, signifying the liquidation of all church debt on the property.⁵⁷

The First Baptist Church has played an active role in Blowing Rock's history. A Women's Missionary Society was organized in 1913, and the Church took an active part in fund-raising efforts for Baptist schools throughout the state.⁵⁸ Ed Robbins, four-time mayor, was a member of the congregation before becoming pastor at Sandy Flat.⁵⁹ D.P. Coffey, another mayor, was treasurer of the Church for twenty-five years.⁶⁰ First Baptist was the only church in the early 20th century to regularly stay open year-round in the Village. It was not only one of the four churches to rotate summer services, but sponsored the only regular Sunday school for much of the period before World War II. In 1948, First Baptist also sponsored a series of religious plays with the casts made up of ministers and lay people from many of Blowing Rock's churches. The plays were introduced by Jewish summer resident, Dr. Morris Lazaron.⁶¹

These civic and interdenominational activities point up the dual role which First Baptist Church has played over the years. While the church's primary mission has been to serve as a house of worship, First Baptist has also actively served the community of Blowing Rock, working always to combine worship and community service in the Village.⁶²

Mount Bethel Reformed Church and the Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds



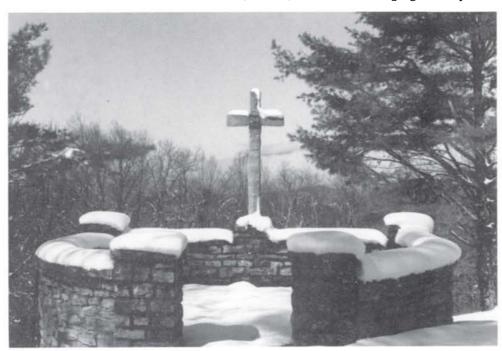
Known affectionately as "the little white church," Mt. Bethel was Blowing Rock's first church edifice. It was built in 1882 but was not dedicated by followers of the German Reform movement until the fourth Sunday in July, 1886.

The Church was organized by the Rev. John Ingle who first visited the town in December, 1882. On that visit, Ingle preached at the residence of Jacob Klutz. In April of the following year, The Rev. Mr. Ingle moved his family to Blowing Rock and with the aid of Rev. J.C. Clapp formed the "Watauga Mission." The officers were Jacob Klutz and George

Thomason, Elders, and S. Bollinger and D.F. Trexler, Deacons.⁶³ The charter members were Mrs. Eliza Jane Holshouser, Mrs. Mary L. Lentz, Mrs. Mary Trexler, Mrs. S.R. Lentz, Mrs. Mary A. Ingle, Mrs. Martha J. Bollinger, James Holshouser, Jacob Klutz, George Thomason, and S. Bollinger.⁶⁴

Mt. Bethel Reformed Church continued services until 1921, when it was disbanded due to a decline in membership. Under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Adrian L. Shuford, Sr. and the late Dr. W.W. Rowe, pastor of the Zion Reformed Church of Lenoir, the Church was again opened for summer services in the 1940s. The Shufords, prominent members of the Southern Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, felt the old Hughes Estate, composed of 58 acres at the terminus of Goforth Road, would make an excellent religious conference center. They shared this idea with Rev. W.W. Rowe, who formally proposed it to the Synod. In May, 1946, descendants of the Abel A. Shuford family and Mr. Jesse Warlick purchased the Hughes Estate for \$16,500 and donated it to the Synod with the understanding that it be made a memorial to the late Abel A. Shuford, Sr. The dedication ceremonies in his honor were held on August 3, 1952. 66

Since that time, the Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds has served as a religious retreat and conference center. In 1953, the Shuford Building was completed, housing offices, a kitchen, dining room and assembly room. During the 1962 season 10,500 people visited the Assembly Grounds. Over one thousand participated in worship services at the "Little White Church," 6,241 meals were served, and 2,227 overnite lodgings were provided.⁶⁷



Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds

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- 18. Watauga Democrat. December 7, 1922.
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- 27. The Blowing Rocket, August 27, 1948.
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- 30. For a comprehensive analysis of the history of Rumple Memorial Church see Saunders, op. cit.,
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- 32. Interview with Mrs. Mary Morris.
- 33. H.E. Spence, "Massive Miramichi Has Colorful Past", The Blowing Rocket, Aug. 3, 1951.
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- 35. Ibid.
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- 54. The Blowing Rocket, Dec. 27 1963.
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CHAPTER VII

Healing the Sick

In the early years of Blowing Rock's existence, proper medical care was, at best, a rarity. Knowledge and practice of modern sanitation and health care were not the general rule in the late nineteenth century in the mountains. Traditional herbal cures, midwives, and the advice of elderly "granny women" provided most of the medical care in the region. Accounts of the area before 1900 did not leave a particularly pretty picture of the health of the mountaineer. Many diseases were common, and knowledge of proper pre-natal, birthing and infant care was scarce. Most people suffered from bowel problems of one kind or another due to poor diets. Tuberculosis, smallpox, pneumonia, diphtheria, and scarlet fever appeared in most mountain communities, and Blowing Rock and the surrounding area were no exception.¹

But over the years Blowing Rock has been blessed with a variety of men and women skilled in the medical arts. These physicians saw a community suffering from inadequate diets, poor sanitation, and a paucity of medical personnel and facilities, and they saw fit to do something about it. The history of medicine in Blowing Rock is largely the story of these individuals and their dedicated efforts to improve the health and well being of the residents of the town, overcoming formidable obstacles along the way. But there is another story, one of philanthropy which has enabled our community to fashion a medical care system far superior to that of most small towns in North Carolina. The efforts of literally hundreds of year-round and seasonal residents have enhanced this chapter in our history and have made it a resounding success. In one hundred years medical care in Blowing Rock has progressed from a nurse-midwife combing the mountains on horsebck to a modern, comprehensive-care hospital and professional staff.

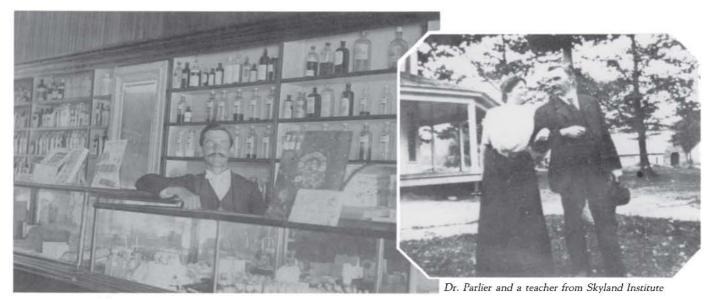
Only one doctor is known to have practiced in Blowing Rock during the first decade or so that the town existed. Regrettably too little is known about him, other than the fact that Dr. Charles Carter had registered his medical diploma with the Clerk of Court in Boone in November, 1889. He received his medical degree from Columbia

University in New York during the Civil War, and later practiced in Philadelphia.² Dr. Carter's wife founded the first library in town, the "Mission House Lend-a-Hand Library." He not only administered to the sick but he also carried books from the Mission House to the bed-ridden that he served. He would often read to his patients, because many of them were unable to read for themselves. He believed in treating the spirit as well as the body and viewed his practice as a mission of God.

The second known doctor in Blowing Rock was Dr. Letcher C. Reeves, who was born in Alleghany County near the town of Sparta. Dr. Reeves moved from Boone to Blowing Rock in the early 1890s and practiced medicine while running a drug store. He married Sallie Councill, and they had two daughters, Ruth and Lena. Around 1899, Dr. Reeves became ill with appendicitis, and was taken by carriage to Lenoir for treatment. The rough road was believed to have been too much for his condition, causing



Dr. and Mrs. Carter's Home in 1896



John Councill at the Reeves Drug Store in the early 1900s

the swollen appendix to burst; the result was a painful death. After Dr. Reeves' death, his wife and daughter ran a gift shop in Blowing Rock for several years. Little else is known about Dr. Reeves, for his untimely death came in 1899, when he was in his early thirties.³ The Reeves house still stands on Main Street, just south of Craig's Grocery.

In May, 1899, shortly after Reeves' death, Dr. Calvin J. Parlier moved from Boone to Blowing Rock and established a practice on Main Street in the Watauga Hotel. Parlier's broad-ranging interests and keen intellect quickly catapulted him into a leadership position in the community. He was the town's first physician-mayor, having been elected in 1901. He also served as an officer of the fledgling Bank of Blowing Rock. For fifteen years, Parlier was a driving force in community affairs and was party to many early decisions which shaped the way Blowing Rock defined itself for generations to come. In 1914, poor health forced Parlier to withdraw from both his professional and civic lives.

Dr. Parlier had the good fortune of not having to work alone. Sophronia "Granny" Robbins, wife of mayor Ed Robbins, served as a midwife and aide to the needy for years, traveling on horseback wherever she was needed. She was the last of the revered "granny women" in Blowing Rock medical history, and her work with Dr. Parlier marks a symbolic passage from the old, folk medicine of the hills to the age of modern medicine.⁴

After Dr. Parlier's practice ended, a result of his ill health, Blowing Rock was briefly without a physician. But the cool beautiful climate of Blowing Rock soon beckoned Dr. James E. Brooks to the town in 1914. Brooks had just retired from the position of superintendent of the State Sanitorium for Tuberculosis and was seeking quiet and solace in the mountains. He resided at the Watauga Inn, but the solace and tranquility he longed for eluded him. There were sick people who were without even the most basic medical care and he could not ignore them. While his retirement would be short-lived, his impact on Blowing Rock and Watauga County health would be long-lasting.

Brooks approached his practice differently from previous Blowing Rock physicians. Because of his age and poor health, he was unable to travel by horseback over rough mountain roads to see patients. He had, after all, come to Blowing Rock to retire. Instead he built a small cottage, and soon had a modest practice. He limited his travel and only answered emergency calls. This outreach is not surprising when one considers that the doctor's experience was with tuberculosis and other communicable diseases. What he had found in Blowing Rock was a hotbed of potential contagion, waiting to spread.

Many of the homes in Blowing Rock had a stable with a couple of cows, perhaps a horse, and some pigs, chickens, and the like. The edible garbage was conveniently thrown out to the pigs and chickens near the house. Windows had no screens, and flies were a common nuisance. The hotels maintained stables, and the stable boys and domestic servants were very prone to use the back lots and bushes instead of the surface privies provided for them. In short, proper sanitation practices were unheard of in many parts of the town.

Brooks saw the need to change this, and he openly attacked the town's sanitation problems. His activism won him few friends, and resulted in his being branded a troublemaker. A pragmatist, Brooks changed his approach and

began to invite prominent members of the community over to his house for fireside chats.

Soon he had won the respect of local civic leaders, and they began to listen to his ideas about sanitation. He even brought such notable figures as Governor Thomas Bickett, ex-Governor Cameron Morrison, and James I. Vance to talk to the people of Blowing Rock and Boone on the theme of "Health and Sanitation." Ultimately, the influence of Brooks and his "disciples" helped change the sanitary habits of Blowing Rock. The old livery stable on Main Street was destroyed. Sanitation became more the order of the day, and surface privies, pigpens, and cowlots were soon removed from Main Street.

Dr. Brooks also brought progressive ideas about health education and nutrition to Blowing Rock. He taught people about contagious diseases and the danger of being exposed to those infected with such things as tuberculosis. Recognizing the degree of general health illiteracy, he began with the basics, such as not drinking from the same cup as someone who is sick. A story is told of an old mountain man who went to him feeling "puny," and Brooks prescribed tomatoes and lemon, much to the patient's amusement and dismay. The notion that certain diseases could be caused by not eating certain foods was foreign to many in the Southern Highlands, but the man did as prescribed, and soon was feeling better. Brooks had properly diagnosed scurvy, and had simply told the man to eat foods with Vitamin C in them.

Dr. Brooks was a crusader for better public sanitation and health laws, including the advocacy of government inspection of public eating places, dairy plants, and the like. He spent his later years in Blowing Rock, communicating these ideas to his peers around the state. Something of an intellectual, he was seen by local residents as a sort of Daniel Webster, and they gave him the nickname of "Webster Brooks." He lived in Blowing Rock with his cat, Dolly Madison, until his death in 1921. Having participated in many of Brooks' fireside chats, Alfred Mordecai, who began his practice of medicine in Blowing Rock in 1915, called him "the father of Modern Sanitation and Health Education in Watauga County."

Dr. Mordecai was not only concerned about the health of Blowing Rock's citizens, he was also a Renaissance man and an outspoken naturalist. In a treatise entitled "Bird Sanctuaries," he criticized the town for failing to protect birds and provide wildlife sanctuaries. One can easily see from the following excerpts that he viewed his role as educator and environmental steward:

For the last ten years the town of Blowing Rock has been called a Bird Sanctuary by the civic minded members of the women's clubs of this locality.

So far the town is a bird sanctuary by *mention only*. It has not received the whole hearted interest of our local inhabitants. It has not received official recognition. It has no substantial legal foundation. It has not received wide acceptance by Tom, Dick and Harry who love rifles and air guns.

We no longer hear the lusty call of the Bob White. The hoot of the owl has disappeared. The wild pheasant is gone. The skip of a young rabbit is seldom seen and the melodious sound of the wood thrush at twilight is rapidly disappearing. It is time to act now!

A bird and wildlife sanctuary means a place of safety for birds and innocent creatures considered becoming to a place of natural beauty and a civilized society, as well as being a useful ecological entity or charming asset.

The good doctor went on to discuss establishing sanctuaries and their proper classification (ever the scientific mind at work). Among those private sanctuaries which Mordecai singled out for praise and recognition were the little cottage and grounds of Nancy and Bertha Beyers, Miss Clarissa Bolick's home on the Globe Road, and the Towee Cabin at the entrance of the Lonesome Pine Trail. The treatise encouraged citizens to take the issue of wildlife habitats for Blowing Rock to the town council and Mordecai even provided a sample bird sanctuary ordinance.

Dr. Mordecai was also a poet and musical composer. His themes often centered on Blowing Rock's natural beauty as in "Dew Drops," which he wrote at his cabin on Globe Road:

Dew Drops

Dew drops— Exquisite, dainty dew drops; Bejewelling Nature's tresses With a gorgeous irridescence In the soft, still light Of a fairy painted dawn.

What a marvelous display, As their myriads sparkle On leaflets of the cedar And the pine, Greeting a glorious day.

The wild rose a Nature's bosom Blushes more sweetly, And the jasmine Emits a fragrance more divine, When touched by such charm.

It is fitting that our friends
Of the hillsides and the glens
The robins, the thrushes
And the wrens,
Sing their praises

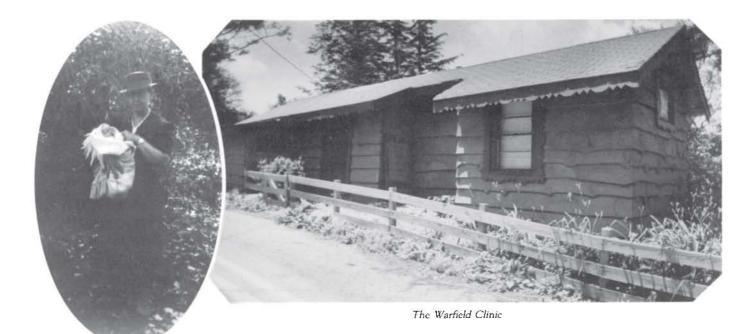
Silently let me stand
And behold the world so grand.
Mirrored by the dew drops;
'Ere the thirsty sun
Drinks 'em up.

In reaching beyond his medical practice to become involved in the broader issues facing the community, Dr. Mordecai was following a fortuitous trend among our physicians. It was a trend which began with Charles Carter. It was the hallmark of his progenitors.

Blowing Rock's first female physician was Mary Cabell Warfield, who came to Blowing Rock as a visitor of Mrs. James Hill and Mrs. Gertrude Chadbourne in 1928. She immediately fell in love with the area and began her practice in an informal way, treating the sick in the surrounding countryside, trying "to see if the mountain people and I could hit it off alright." Her early experiences were apparently rewarding because two years later, in May of 1930, she moved to Blowing Rock and established a more formal, year-round practice. It was the beginning of a mutual love relationship between the people of Blowing Rock and Dr. Warfield. It also represented the beginning of modern medicine in the town.⁷

Mary Warfield, a native of Easton, Pennsylvania, was the daughter of the president of Lafayette College. She attended the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia, the only medical school in the country in the early 1900s exclusively for women. Warfield had visions of becoming a missionary in India or Africa, but as a victim of the "flu" epidemic of World War I, she was considered too weak for overseas work by the Presbyterian Board of Missions.8 With characteristic resolve, she went on to serve as the resident physician at Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Even in the early 1930s, residents of the remote and inaccessible sections of Blowing Rock had formed the habit when ill of waiting until the last possible minute to call a physician. A common practice was to try all their own home remedies, their neighbors' remedies, a visit to the drugstore medicine shelves, and then only as a last resort to



Dr. Mary Warfield with one of the many babies she delivered

contact a physician, which was not an easy task in those days. Prior to Dr. Warfield's arrival, there was often no physician to be found in the Blowing Rock area, and even after her arrival, she was the only physician within an eight to ten mile radius.⁹

Always interested in children, Dr. Warfield spent the winter of 1931 studying pediatrics. One of her first priorities was to establish a baby clinic, which she quickly accomplished. It was located on the south end of Main Street near the Methodist Church. Dr. Warfield accepted no pay for work performed in the baby clinic. She differentiated between preventive medicine and curing illness. The baby clinic was preventive, for "its purpose," according to Dr. Warfield, was to "ward off every kind of sickness and raise the stamina and powers of resistance of the mountain people." She felt this *pro bono* work was part of her duty as a physician. Dr. Warfield did, however, charge a fee for treating sickness, because she felt that people had more respect for services and for themselves when they paid. This fee was often paid in services or goods, not cash.¹¹

Dr. Warfield was a large, heavy-set woman who struck local people as being unassuming and casual, yet she had a quick sense of humor. She had a constant companion, a German shepherd dog, that went with her everywhere and always sat in the front seat of her car.¹² Her dog had a great many chances to accompany her because Mary Warfield spent many hours on the road administering to and caring for Blowing Rock's sick. One of her prized possessions were the medical saddle bags once used by Dr. Parlier as he traveled the mountain trails on horseback.¹³

A legendary excursion that truly showed Dr. Warfield's dedication to her patients occurred around Christmas, 1930. Even ol' Saint Nicholas himself would have been hard-pressed to keep up. On December 22, at about midnight, Dr. Warfield dutifully went to Bailey's Camp to deliver a baby. Arriving back in town, she was immediately faced with another delivery, this one lasting until late in the afternoon of the 23rd. Before the baby had even been delivered, she had a call to go to Coffey's Gap, where 18 inches of snow lay on the ground. Finishing this case about 2 a.m., she enjoyed a hot breakfast and set out for Blowing Rock, only to find the carburetor on her car frozen! She finally got back to Blowing Rock on Christmas Day, where two families were waiting for her with sick children. That was seventy-two straight hours of loving care. Such was the life of a country doctor before the demise of house calls.

In addition to making house calls and running the free baby clinic, Warfield operated another clinic one day each month in Bailey's Camp. This clinic was sponsored by the Lutheran Church.¹⁵ As if all this were not enough, she held a number of free clinics to examine children's tonsils and remove them if necessary. One of the first of these was held in April, 1928, in the Blowing Rock School, where two rooms served as wards and a third was an operating room. Twenty children had their tonsils removed that day, with Warfield assisted by Dr. Petrie from Lenoir and

a team of several nurses.16

Six months after the realization of Dr. Warfield's dream, the founding of a general clinic for Blowing Rock, she wrote an article on the progress and expenditures of the clinic:

Six months ago the Blowing Rock Clinic opened its doors. This was made possible through the gifts of many generous friends, gifts not only of money, but of labor and materials. The clinic is a tiny four-room building, thirty feet square, equipped to care for four patients—this has already been stretched to nine on one occasion—but it is free of debt, comfortable and full of sunshine. A gift of a furnace makes it cozy even for midnight calls.

Just now we are looking for our latest gift, a big open porch for use this summer. As many of you know the nurses' room was a gift of Ms. Bryce Beard in memory of her mother, Bessie Alexander Patterson. The kitchen also was given in memory of Margaret Walker Hill by a group of her friends.

Now we are six-months old. In that time we have had 70 patients, representing 210 bed days. These cover a wide range of conditions, among them, one appendectomy, the removal of three small tumors, three circumcisions, 37 tonsillectomies and eight new babies.

The new babies are always the most interesting subject. Each of these eight mothers realizes and passes the word along that her baby has had the best possible start in life, to say nothing of her own increased comfort with nursing care and freedom from household burdens. Three owe their lives to the fact that the clinic was on top of the mountain instead of 23 miles under it. One was a hurry call — a two-and-a-half pound premature little man whose mother was dying of ecclampsia when she was brought to us. The baby would never have pulled through without skillful nursing.

The gift of a small up-to-date x-ray machine saved six patients with fractures a long painful trip down the mountain. It has also set our minds at rest in a number of doubtful cases. The added gift of a basal metabolism machine aids greatly in prompt diagnosis.

The running expenses of the clinic for the past six months have been \$610.94. This reduced to daily cost is four dollars per day which is slightly less than the official average estimate of the American Medical Association. As this is twice as much as most of our patients can pay, we must have help. The income from patients' fees has amounted to \$263.25.

The clinic building is free of debt and the maintenance and nurses' funds give us a clear margin for another three months. However, as we are only at the beginning of what we hope may be a long service to the community, we need:

- (1) An endowment for the nurses' salary without whom we could not carry on. This salary has been given by two friends and a gift from the Presbyterian Church.
- (2) An endowment of \$2 a day for each of our four beds and two cribs.

Will you not put us in your budget of good works for 1936 and many years to come?

Mary Cabell Warfield, M.D. Blowing Rock Clinic January 6, 1936¹⁷

After four years of operation the rules for the clinic had remained relatively simple:

REGULATIONS OF THE BLOWING ROCK CLINIC

1. PATIENTS-

Any ill person is eligible provided he or she-

- (a) Has not a contagious disease.
- (b) That the clinic is equipped to care for the condition.
- (c) Shall meet the clinic charge for care.
- (d) Shall submit to clinic routine.

2. DOCTORS—

- (a) The clinic shall have a physician in charge of the work. No work will be done in the absence of the director, except under an appointed substitute.
- (b) Any qualified physician may bring his patient to the clinic provided he enters the patient under the clinic rules and assumes full responsibility for the patient.

3. NURSES—

- (a) There shall be a nurse on duty whenever a patient is in the clinic.
- (b) The duty of the resident nurse is first to the patient in the house. When she is at liberty she shall be available for school work and home treatments at the discretion of the director.
- (c) Additional nurses may be employed by the director as needed. The expense is to be borne by the patient's family where this is possible.

The Clinic continued to operate for a number of years, and although progress was made in terms of services offered and patients served, the Clinic's fiscal health deteriorated. The staff was overworked and expenses exceeded income. As a result, the Clinic closed during the winter for several years while Dr. Warfield returned to assist her aging parents in Pennsylvania.

By 1940, people in Blowing Rock were acutely aware of the need for increased support of the Clinic by the community. A concerted drive was launched on August 30th to assure the continued operation of the Clinic. The Clinic's Board of Governors, composed of Charles Cannon, Bishop Henry Phillips, David Ovens, J. Anthony Panuch, and Herman Cone, organized groups to work in conjunction with a special Sunday benefit matinee at the Yonahlossee Theater. A benefit fashion show was also sponsored by Montaldo's at the Mayview Manor.¹⁸

Regular soliciting for contributions to the Clinic was also carried out by year-round and seasonal residents. A special women's auxilliary board, composed of Mrs. Anna Baker Fenner, Mrs. Lucille Boyden, Mrs. Leonard Busky, Mrs. Charles Beck, Miss Betsy Bunce, Miss Gail Goodin, and Miss Renee Blagg, was instrumental in many of the details associated with the fund-raising effort.¹⁹

Fenner and Boyden were in charge of arrangements at the fashion show. Bunce and Blagg carried fund-raising efforts to the Green Park Hotel, the golf shop, the nineteenth hole and the casino. Mrs. Leonard Busby was in charge of publicity while Mrs. Beck sold tickets for the matinee benefit. David Ovens, ever the articulate speaker, made the plea for contributions prior to the showing of the film "Rose Marie."²⁰

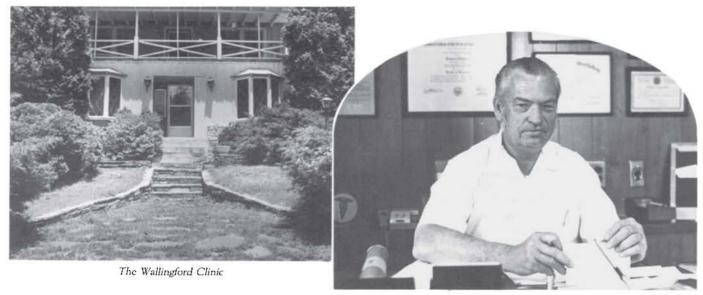
Before the special 1940 fund-raising effort, the Clinic had always depended upon Norman Cordon's annual Village concert as a means of raising funds. Cordon, a star of the Metropolitan Opera and summer resident of Blowing Rock, began the benefit concerts in 1938. He donated all proceeds to the clinic, including, of course, his time and considerable talents. Special church collections were also employed as a fund-raising technique.²¹

In 1943, David Ovens began sponsoring benefit concerts for the Blowing Rock Clinic where he served on the Board of Trustees and on the Special Donations Committee.²² These concerts were held at the newly constructed Blowing Rock Club. Artists engaged for special services at Rumple Memorial were asked to sing at these concerts as well, while they were in the area. It was customary for Ovens and his wife to entertain the artists for the weekend at their home, "Pineacres." All of the proceeds from the Country Club concerts went to the Clinic.²³

An article in *The Blowing Rocket* revealed the level of Oven's involvement in fund-raising for the Clinic: "We knew Mr. Ovens sponsored the concerts, but we're just finding out that he doesn't just sponsor them, he backs them. He invites the musicians, he entertains them in his home, he gives the programs, has the tickets prepared, in fact to every question we have asked about the concert, the one answer has been, Mr. Ovens. The concert is a generous and cultural gesture from Mr. Ovens to this village that he loves and to the hospital here that he holds in pride."²⁴

Whereas the presentations at Rumple Memorial on Grandfather Home Day featured sacred music, concerts for the clinic were a combination of operatic selections and musical memories. Both programs were considered by many, including Ward French, President of the Community Concert Association of America and Canada, to be two of the outstanding musical presentations offered in America or Canada.²⁵

Meanwhile, the winds of change were beginning to blow, as Dr. Warfield's years of serving the medical needs of



Dr. Charles Davant, Jr.

Blowing Rock were coming to an end. Her practice in the mid 40s had been restricted to the summer months, and by 1948, she was preparing to move to Tryon. Just prior to her move, in the winter of 1946, she was involved in a tragic automobile crash and received injuries that would give her trouble the rest of her life.

Recognizing the community's need for a physician, Mayor Grover Robbins, Sr., approached a young South Carolinian who had rented a summer cottage in Blowing Rock so his family could escape the polio epidemic he was fighting in Lenoir. Dr. Charles Davant, Jr., touched by Robbins' appeal, agreed to commute from his practice in Lenoir. Initially, he saw patients only on afternoons and Sundays. These early experiences were enough, though, for the townspeople to know that Charles Davant had the "bedside manner" they wanted in a doctor. But could Blowing Rock hold a man of Davant's skill and training?

In January 1949, the Clinic was moved to more spacious quarters on Wallingford Street. While this new clinic was larger, it was still inadequate to meet the community's basic medical needs. The Blowing Rock Rotary Club came to the rescue, contributing labor, materials and much of the finances needed to modify the Clinic. Utilizing space underneath the building, the Rotary Club added a doctor's office, treatment room, waiting room, kitchen, laboratory, and darkroom. The building included four private rooms and two double rooms — a great improvement over the original Clinic on Main Street. And it was completed without one penny of government aid.

The little mountain community, with its vast natural beauty and unusual blend of residents, began to appeal to Davant more than he ever thought it would: "I started seeing patients in the little clinic behind the Presbyterian Church," Davant recalled. "One afternoon I saw sixteen patients and made eight or nine house calls. Things just sort of mushroomed and grew and grew, and I went back down the mountain and told Harriet [his charming wife] that I was seriously considering coming to Blowing Rock to practice." He moved to Blowing Rock in 1948, and the town has been the beneficiary of his talents and dedication ever since. In 1950 Dr. Davant was named Medical Director of Blowing Rock Hospital, a responsibility he carries to the present day.

In 1951, in a plea for community support for a new hospital, The Blowing Rocket praised Davant's efforts:

As everyone in the community knows, the dynamo or driving force behind the Blowing Rock Hospital today is Dr. Charles Davant. Without his warm friendship, keen professional interest in his patients, and his skill in both medicine and surgery, the hospital here would be just another mountain town dispensary. Ever since his arrival in Blowing Rock three years ago, he has worked constantly to enlarge the facilities of the present building and to install the best in modern medical equipment. Blowing Rock is proud of "Doctor Charlie."

"Give a doctor a suitable place to work and he can practice good medicine. Blowing Rock needs a larger, modern, fireproof place to provide adequate medical care for its winter and summer residents and the people of outlying communities such as Globe, Bailey's Camp, Blackberry Valley, and Gragg," he says.

Relaxing over a "Coke," Dr. Charlie took a moment's "time out" to reminisce. "My grandfather was a country

doctor in Pendleton, S.C., and my great grandfather was a surgeon in Jeb Stuart's calvary during the Civil War. I cut my teeth on stories of circuit-riding doctors, contaminated instruments, lack of anesthesia, and countless hundreds of needless deaths. Even in the three years that I've been in Blowing Rock, new miracle drugs have become available. But I must have a place to treat my patients and our present building is simply not large enough to house either my patients or the new equipment. Another constant worry is the ever present danger of fire. If you've ever read an account of a hospital fire, and there have been many in the past year, with the lives of new born babies and the ill and helpless lost so needlessly, you can understand why a mountain doctor has many sleepless nights. We do not have a single fire escape facility in our present building."

Now after three years of untiring labor, caring for our children, delivering our babies, treating the ill and aged, Doctor Charlie is asking us to help build a bigger and better hospital so that he can do an even better job. Let's all get behind the drive and give him what he needs to do the work we need. A contribution to the hospital is a vote of appreciation and confidence for Dr. Davant.

The earlier improvements to the Wallingford Street Clinic were widely recognized as only a temporary measure. By 1951, the Board of Trustees seriously began to seek funds to build a twenty bed hospital, and they released a report to *The Blowing Rocket* in August, 1951, in which they outlined a proposal for a new hospital, a need they called "urgent." The Trustees had \$10,000 from the will of Mrs. Moses Cone for the construction of a new hospital. That was an excellent start, but they would need a great deal more money to build a modern hospital. Other small communities had similar ambitions only to find that money of that magnitude was hard to come by. What Blowing Rock needed was a miracle — an angel of mercy who could help translate the town's dream into reality. Indeed, Blowing Rock's angel appeared. The following letter, dated August 23rd, 1951, and published on the front page of *The Blowing Rocket*, attests to that fact:

Trustees of Blowing Rock Hospital Blowing Rock, North Carolina

Dear Trustees:

For some time, and particulary during the past few months, I have felt that our Community's most pressing need is for a larger and better equipped hospital.

I understand that it will take approximately \$70,000 to build and properly equip a new hospital and that you have started a building fund with the \$10,000 left to the hospital by the late Mrs. Moses Cone. I am anxious not only to contribute to this project but also to enlist the cooperation of the whole community to its early realization.

Under the circumstances, I am willing to donate to the hospital marketable securities having a market value of \$30,000 at the time the gift is made on one condition, and you may consider this letter as a pledge and obligation on my part to make such a gift as and when you shall have advised me that you have obtained gifts or pledges totaling an additional \$30,000 from other sources towards the hospital project. This offer shall be valid up to and including the 15th day of February 1952.

With best wishes for a successful campaign, I am

Sincerely yours, ANNE REYNOLDS TATE

After receiving Anne Tate's challenge, the Board of Trustees, composed of Laura Cone, Charles A. Cannon, Herman Cone, Angelia Harris, David Ovens, J. Anthony Panuch, Bishop Henry J. Phillips, and Margaret Vance, launched a campaign to match the \$30,000 pledge. Three separate fund-raising committees were established: Summer Residents Committee, Permanent Residents Committee, and Special Donations Committee. By the fall of 1951, the committees had successfully secured the additional funds needed for the match and Blowing Rock was assured a new hospital.²⁸

Work progressed rapidly on the new hospital, built on Chestnut Drive, and in June of 1952, the pleasant task of

moving into a modern, 20-bed hospital began. It was a glorious day for the town, a day of celebration and pride and great expectations. But it was also an appropriate occasion to reflect on how far our small town had come in a relatively short period of time. Less than forty years had passed since "Granny Robbins" traveled the trails on horseback practicing midwifery.

The operation of the hospital was placed in the hands of year-round residents of the community, because as the Trustees commented at the time, "the hospital belongs to the community and its citizens." The first Board of Officers included H.P. Holshouser, Chairman; J.A. Winkler, Vice-Chairman; Carrie H. Johnson, Secretary; and Margaret Vance, Treasurer.

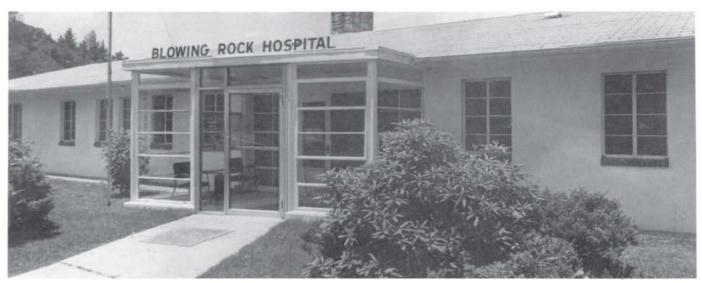
The Charlotte Observer noted the accomplishments of the community and conveyed congratulations in an editorial:

Because a community believed in itself, there is one more hospital in North Carolina and one less figure on the chart which depicts the counties and towns without hospital facilities. We are speaking of course, of Blowing Rock, in the western part of the state, and its new hospital, an outgrowth of the Warfield Medical Clinic, founded in 1936.



A young Anne Cannon receives the Blue Ribbon at the 1942 Blowing Rock Horse Show

Blowing Rock dedicated its new hospital last Sunday in ceremonies which must have reflected pride in a job well done. The building was constructed for less than \$100,000 about one third the cost of comparable structures. The money was raised locally. Some who could not give substantial donations in cash gave their labor, and many gave both. Thus the efforts and the dreams of Dr. Mary Warfield, Dr. Charles Davant, Stradley Kipp, and others in the Blowing Rock community have born fruitful results. Blowing Rock has its hospital.



The Blowing Rock Hospital



A Hospital Benefit Fashion Show at Mayview Manor

Blowing Rock's addition is small, as compared to major medical complexes around the country, but it is mighty. Growing out of the people themselves, it is another splendid example of North Carolina's determination to bring equal opportunity for good health to its people everywhere.

The new Blowing Rock Medical Clinic met the medical needs of the community for over fifteen years. These were years of dramatic advances in health technology and spiraling medical costs nationwide. It is to the credit of Dr. Davant, Stradley Kipp (hospital administrator) and the Board of Trustees that the per patient daily cost at Blowing Rock Medical Clinic was consistently below the national average. Philanthropy helped keep the Hospital up-to-date with emerging health technologies and many citizens in the outlying areas who once viewed hospitals as a last resort or a place to go to die, now came early for treatment. In that sense, the new Clinic and its dedicated staff were instrumental in transforming many rural citizens' attitudes toward health care.

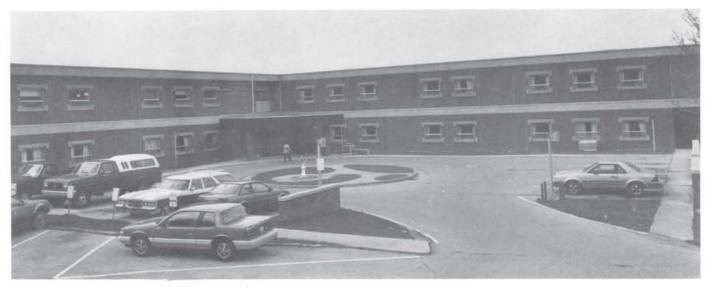


The Blowing Rock Medical Clinic

Hospital bed space became a problem in the early sixties, when Blowing Rock's population grew rapidly. Blowing Rock was developing as a winter resort, further complicating the matter. An increase in the senior citizen population and the availability of Medicare also increased the need not only for beds for acutely ill patients, but also for those in need of rehabilitation or long-term care.

It became evident that proper health care required specialized hospital services for those suffering from chronic diseases or difficulties accompanying old age. Blowing Rock Medical Clinic responded to these new challenges and opened, in 1968, a facility intent on seeing to the needs and well-being of such patients. The new facility, which was fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, included a much-needed Physical Therapy Department, and an impressive new surgical complex, emergency treatment suite, as well as new patient rooms and a nursery.

A million-and-a-half dollars was raised through individual contributions and government grants and in August of 1968 the new Dr. Charles Davant Extended Care Center was dedicated. It was an altogether fitting salute to a man who had contributed so much to the health and well-being of our community.



The Dr. Charles Davant, Jr. Extended Care Center



NOTES

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- 2. Watauga Democrat, November 7, 1889.
- 3. Information about Dr. Reeves was gathered from his grandniece, Mrs. John M. Lewis of Dunn, N.C.
- 4. Watauga Democrat, May 25, 1899.
- 5. "Granny Robbins Beloved Early Lady," The Blowing Rock Story, 1983, p. 47
- 6. Alfred Mordecai, "James Edwin Brooks, M.D.," Part II, North Carolina Medical Journal, June, 1958, pp. 238-242.
- 7. "Mary Campbell Warfield was dedicated doctor of 1930-46," The Blowing Rock Story. 1983, p. 21.
- 8. The Blowing Rocket, July 6, 1979.
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- 10. Ibid.
- 11. The Blowing Rocket, July 6, 1979.
- 12. Telephone interview with Mrs. Carrie Buxton, March 27, 1988.
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- 14. Ibid.
- 15. Watauga Democrat, May 30, 1928.
- 16. The Blowing Rocket, July 6, 1979.
- 17. "Report of the Blowing Rock Clinic", January 6, 1936, by Mary Cabell Warfield, M.D.
- 18. "Drive for Clinic Begins Today." The Blowing Rocket, August 30, 1940.
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- 20. Ibid.
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- 23. Saunders, Don. For His Cause A Little House, Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1988.
- 24. The Blowing Rocket, August 7, 1953.
- 25. The Blowing Rocket, August 19, 1955.
- 26. "From a Tiny, Four Bed Clinic," The Blowing Rocket, July 6, 1979.
- 27. Interview with Dr. Charles Davant, Jr., November 17, 1987.
- 28. "From a Tiny Four Bed Clinic," op. cit.



CHAPTER VIII

Becoming A Seasonal Mecca

While the 1920s were a period of growth and economic prosperity for Blowing Rock and the rest of the country, the Great Depression brought an abrupt end to the good times. Unlike many other communities, however, Blowing Rock avoided the brunt of the hard times because of the wealth of its seasonal residents and the leadership of local officials. Foremost among these was Grover C. Robbins.

Robbins was a civic booster par excellence. He traveled widely and lobbied extensively for increased tourist traffic and business growth. Robbins served as Blowing Rock Mayor from 1928-1934, 1939-1944, and again from 1947-48.

Blowing Rock's tourist trade had grown rapidly since the First World War, a partial result of the development of state and federal highway systems. That growth, however, had been largely unplanned. As Mayor, Grover Robbins moved quickly to institutionalize planning for the future. In April of 1930, for the first time ever, the town governments of Boone and Blowing Rock began a joint advertising campaign in travel magazines to draw tourists to Watauga County.¹ The following summer, one of the cottages belonging to Tom Coffey at the Watauga Inn was converted into Blowing Rock's first tourist information center.²

The actual Blowing Rock was one of the first items on the development agenda. In 1932 the attraction was largely undeveloped

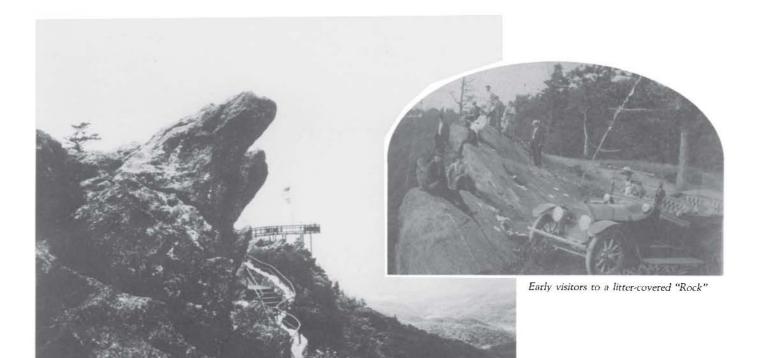
save for a small restaurant (the Cloudland Cafe) and observation tower. These businesses were owned by John Ford, a local surveyor and sawmill operator from Bailey's Camp. The Rock was unfenced and open to any and all visitors. Unfortunately, its popularity led to a large litter problem; what had once been an asset had become an eyesore. The Bernhardt family of Lenoir, owners of the property, attempted to donate it to the town, but the town council was unwilling to accept financial responsibility for its upkeep. Private development



Grover C. Robbins, Sr., at The Blowing Rock



Tourists visited by the busload



The Blowing Rock's view is one of the most beautiful in the entire Blue Ridge chain

became a viable alternative. Grover Robbins and C.H. Berryman leased the property and built a soda fountain there in 1933.³ A court case established J.M. Bernhardt's right to limit access and charge admission to the Rock.⁴ Three years later Robbins purchased Dr. Berryman's interest in the lease and began construction of the stone structure which serves today as the reception center/gift shop. Still owned by the Bernhardt family, the Rock's preservation is a tribute to private management, the free enterprise system, and the joint concern of Ford, Robbins, Berryman, and Bernhardt.

Blowing Rock business promotion was the next item to feel Grover Robbins' organizational touch. A Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1934, with Mayor Robbins serving as its first president. Real estate developer C.S. Prevette was vice-president with G.E. Tester, G.T. Robbins, and Dr. C.H. Berryman also serving as the first officers. The link between business growth and tourism was now firmly established in the minds of Blowing Rock's citizens.⁵

But Mayor Robbins was not just content to advertise and prepare the town for visitors. He went on the road himself in search of tourists. He made frequent trips to Raleigh and Chapel Hill to convince state-wide businesses and government organizations to hold their annual conventions in the mountains. The Blowing Rock Boy Scouts were even pressed into service in 1938 and put on duty as tourist guides, performing "good deeds" for their community all summer long. Tourism was Blowing Rock's "goose that laid the golden egg," and Grover Robbins kept that goose happy. It was fortunate for the Village that he did. The year-round population had grown from 338 in 1920 to 503 in 1930. While people around the country were going jobless, construction opportunities in Blowing Rock provided badly-needed employment.

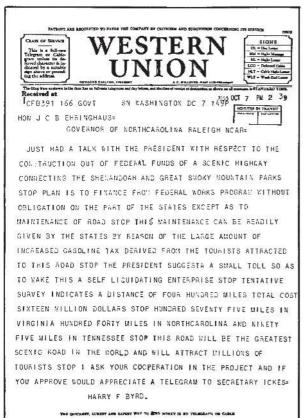
The Depression had its effects, of course. As with the hard times at the end of the nineteenth century, some natives moved west to seek their fortunes. Special acts of the state legislature were passed in 1928 and 1933 exempting Blowing Rock from the legal requirement of auctioning off property owned by citizens who owed back taxes.⁸ The Bank of Blowing Rock, with A.C. Moody as President and Grover Robbins Vice-President, closed its doors in December, 1931, for the first time since its founding in 1904. It reopened quickly, but closed again March 6, 1933 as part of Franklin Roosevelt's national program to stabilize the banking system. Its solvency was demonstrated when it was included in an early wave of reopenings on March 17, the first Watauga County bank to be allowed to reopen.⁹

The Coming of the Parkway

Two decisions have been particularly crucial in shaping Blowing Rock's destiny. The first of these was the decision by B.B. Dougherty to locate Watauga Academy (to become Appalachian State University) in Boone rather than Blowing Rock. The second was the decision of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1933, to support the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Blue Ridge Parkway was a child of the Depression. It was designed to link the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks and to provide jobs for Southern Appalachia's unemployed. It is America's first national rural parkway and along the 469 mile drive its fortunate traveler encounters beauty, romance, and history.

Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia, a very early proponent of the Parkway, sent the following telegram to the Governors of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia on October 7, 1933, urging their support of the proposed motor road:



From the earliest planning stages onward, Blowing Rock lobbied to be part of the Parkway route. Grover Robbins traveled to Washington, Baltimore, and Raleigh to assure Blowing Rock's inclusion. Like Harry F. Byrd, Robbins and other civic leaders recognized the potential for "millions" of tourists to come to the area via "the greatest scenic road in the world."

Residents of this area heard about the coming of the Parkway at the time of the official announcement by Secretary of State Harold Ickes on July 21, 1934. They had no idea of the eventual impact the Parkway would have on the region or that Blowing Rock would be part of the route.

Not all Blowing Rock citizens were supportive of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Interestingly, one of our most influential seasonal residents, David Ovens, had this to say about the motor road in his book entitled *If This Be Treason*:

I had quite forgotten to mention the Blue Ridge Parkway, which we are all paying taxes to build. We could do very well without it and there are very few accommodations on the route. The speed limit is definitely prescribed, and most people prefer the regular road. They are extending it this summer through the Cone Estate in Blowing Rock. As I spend some time there each summer, I go out to see the progress they are making. The speed isn't much, but the expense looks to be terrific. Since we are mortgaging our future to take care of it, we could get along without it.



A Friend of Orphans

His opinions of the Blue Ridge Parkway notwithstanding, David Ovens was a powerful force behind the progress of our community during the '30s, '40s and '50s. He worked closely with Charlotte merchant J.B. Ivey in transforming Ivey's into one of the leading retail organizations in the southeast.

In addition to his accomplishments in the business world, Ovens was a true humanitarian. According to the *Charlotte Observer*, in 1951, Ovens donated, without fanfare, over half-a-million dollars to Queens College, Davidson College, Duke University, the Presbyterian Hospital, and the Edgar Tufts Memorial Association in Banner Elk.

Ovens was known for his delightful sense of humor, strong personality, and sharp wit, all of which are reflected in his book. He enjoyed "poking fun" at the elite of Charlotte for what he described as their pretentiousness and narrow-mindedness. He even had a few words to say about his adopted summer home: "Blowing Rock is developing into quite a fine resort. It has a number of excellent hotels and one, the Mayview Manor, attracts the rich because of its high prices and good food. The high prices alone would be enough to fill the house, because people like to send cards back home from a place like that."



Post card depicting the simple charm of the Village

Ovens always claimed that he never had the time for hobbies of any kind, but he never denied his passion for music. He owned the first collection of Red Seal records in Charlotte and, in 1910, used the collection to present a recital to the Charlotte Women's Club. He was one of the organizers and directors of the Charlotte Music Festival Association, which for several years presented concerts at the old city auditorium featuring singers and musical organizations of the highest rank. He also organized the Ivey Choral Club, was president of the Community Concert Association, and the Goodfellows Octette, a noted musical group. He is even credited with bringing the great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso to Charlotte. But Dave Ovens also brought music and famed musicians to Blowing Rock, for the benefit of the Grandfather Home for Children and the Blowing Rock Hospital.

During the mid-1930s, Dave Ovens and his wife built a summer home in Blowing Rock on the corner of Goforth Road and Wonderland Drive. At their home overlooking the golf course, the Ovenses hosted, according to Rev. Walter K. Keys, "the great and the near great, the talented and the famous, the rich, and the poor, all of them thankful that they have been permitted to share in the hospitality and gracious living within its walls." A staunch Presbyterian, upon his arrival in Blowing Rock, Ovens established a close relationship with Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church and the Grandfather Home for Children, located in Banner Elk.



"Pineacres," - The David Ovens home on Goforth Road and Wonderland Drive

Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church began observing Grandfather Home Day in 1918. The purpose of the day, held annually the second Sunday in August, was to encourage local residents and members of the congregation to donate money to support Grandfather Orphanage. Grandfather Orphanage was founded by Edgar Tufts, who first came to this region in 1895 as a seminary student. In the spring of 1897, the Reverend Mr. Tufts returned to the area,



David Ovens (seated) with Anne Bryan, Rev. Walter Keys, and participants in the Grandfather Home Day festivities

serving churches in Blowing Rock and Banner Elk. He believed strongly that the ministry of the church should extend beyond the pulpit and he worked hard to enhance the quality of life in our mountain communities. Tufts founded Grandfather Orphanage in 1914 to provide a year-round home for mountain children with no parents or whose parents were unable to care for them. Since the Orphanage was supported solely by contributions from individuals and churches, Grandfather Home

Day at Rumple Memorial became a very important source of income. According to Margaret Tufts Neal, in her book And Set Aglow A Sacred Flame, "Early in the history of the Home, during the lifetime of the senior Tufts, the Rumple Memorial Church in Blowing Rock designated one Sunday in the summer as Grandfather Orphans Home Day. The project was nurtured by such summer residents as Dr. Charles Vardell of Red Springs, North Carolina who was President of Flora MacDonald College, and Dr. James I. Vance of Nashville, Tennessee. The special offering on that Sunday, though small by today's standards, was a needed addition to the tight yearly budget."

The scope and support of the effort was dramatically increased by the participation of Dave Ovens. In 1939, hoping to stimulate more interest in the project, Ovens brought to Blowing Rock members of the Metropolitan Opera. These included Joseph Matthew, tenor; Elsie Davis, contralto; Gertrude Gover, soprano; Maury Pearson, baritone and Elsie Moseley, accompanist. The singers performed at the Rumple Memorial Sunday Worship service and Ovens, well known as an articulate and entertaining speaker, made the first of many successful pleas for contributions. Professor Donald Saunders, author of Rumple's history, states that Ovens was determined to make this project "the biggest thing on the mountain." Thus began a lifetime of bringing "the great stars of the musical world" to Rumple Memorial for the benefit of the Grandfather Orphanage.

The Watauga Democrat noted that in 1940, Ovens sponsored the Charlotte Festival Singers, an eight-member group, and the following year Agnes Davis, the famous American soprano, performed along with Benjamin DeLouche, the distinguished American baritone.

In 1948, Grandfather Home Day received more publicity than usual when the *Charlotte Observer* praised Ovens for his work with the orphanage: "We salute you as outstanding benefactor of Grandfather Orphanage because of the large amounts of money that have been raised in past summers for its support from voluntary contributions made by tourists, vacationists and residents of the Blowing Rock Community, as a result of your efforts. We congratulate you upon the fact that these annual Sunday morning orphanage services, featuring celebrated musical artists, have attracted large overflow audiences and resulted each year in large contributions to the support of hundreds of orphan children."

According to Margaret Tufts Neal, "Grandfather Home Day in Blowing Rock was also a day of excitement and suspense in Banner Elk. For the children who went to represent the Home, there was getting dressed and ready for the trip to Rumple Memorial, last minute practicing of the songs they were to sing, and the breathless anticipation of having dinner in one of the homes of the congregation. Back in Banner Elk, there was the long wait to hear at the end of the day the total amount contributed. When for several years the offering amounted to four thousand dollars, there was great rejoicing and relief, especially for those responsible for making ends meet. It literally meant a comfortable margin in the budget for another 12 months."

Upon his death in 1957, the *Charlotte Observer* remembered Ovens as a philanthropist, gentleman, and great humanitarian. Their words describe him well: "David Ovens created out of the material of the human spirit a rare and precious gift for his fellow man. It was, in essence, love. He expressed it in many ways—philanthropy without fanfare,

compassion for the weak and the defeated, confidence in the essential goodness in every human breast, faith in the ordered unity of religion and, not the least, appreciation of beauty in all of its inexhaustible abundance. He was a man of wit as well as wisdom and sensitivity and he polished his vision of 'the good life' with a rare sense of humor. It served him well as a mask for softer sentiments that always seemed to lurk just below the surface of a wry merriment."

After fifty years of mutual mingled comfortably together for residents, however, still led a social life They had their own newspaper, *The* reporter of cottager social life and months. The publisher and business Henkel. A.T. Robertson, Jr. was the society editor. The Cannons were at transient newcomer movie stars rivaled old prestige with new sion," was a main attraction for

The Mayview Manor joined the Hotel as the "in" spots for Village locals were now afforded the luxury evening dances. While golf, tennis sporting activities, fox-hunting Sidney Blackmer, Donald Boyden of Tate's stables, this evening pastime led reported by *The Blowing Rocket*,

A Dichotomy of Lifestyles



O.J. Coffey and Rob Bradshaw engage in an impromptu game of checkers as Omer Coffey and Thomas Coffey look on

familiarity, natives and cottagers business and civic purposes. Summer quite separate from that of the locals. Blowing Rocket, begun in 1932 as a printed only during the summer manager of the paper was C.V. editor and Mary Cannon was the the top of the social ladder, although Lenore Ulric and Sidney Blackmer celebrity. Their cottage, "intermistourists.

Green Park Hotel and Blowing Rock night life. Cottagers, tourists, and of choice in selecting orchestras for and riding were the most popular enjoyed a brief vogue. Encouraged by the Blowing Rock Hotel, and Lloyd a short but colorful life. As wryly "Fox-hunting at Blowing Rock is

quite unlike fox-hunting elsewhere. We looked askance at first on the local pastime of driving out into the woods at night in automobiles and just listening while the dogs run Reynard to cover or up a tree. Our first experience, however, convinced us that this form of the chase (with plenty of paper cups and chasers) has its advantages. The fire built on a high pasture with the music of the hounds rolling from the black and distant valleys miles away; the wind which brings the sound of the pack now nearer, now farther off; the advice of experienced huntsmen who know just what cover the fox is making for; all these steal the night hours and before you know it the stars are paling over Grandfather."¹⁰

The peak of the summer social season was the Horse Show with its parties and pageantry. Here, the glories of Blowing Rock before air conditioning and the automobile could be recaptured. The Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show, which began in 1923, attracted equestrians from throughout the southeast. Lloyd Tate, the Horse Show's founder and director for many years, held the first show on Green Hill. In those early days the Horse Show was largely a social event with area riders. Hayden Clement, Frank Jones, and Colonel Robert Gray, who acted as judges



at the early shows, were alleged to have been partial to pretty girls, regardless of riding skills, so the prettiest girls generally rode home bedecked in blue ribbons.

In 1928 the Horse Show was moved to its present, Mayview location. The *Watauga Democrat* reported that "a special grandstand and riding ring has (sic.) been constructed on the old Mayview golf course. Prizes will be awarded in thirteen classes and mounts are expected from the south's finest stables."

Interestingly, the present day Horse Show had a forerunner before the turn-of-the-century. The September 8, 1897





Pictured with Lloyd Tate (center) are the 1949 Association Officers (left to right): D.M. Bower, Mrs. Joseph F. Cannon, Mrs. W.B. Shuford, and Charles G. Beck



"Junebug" Tate promotes the 1941 Horse Show in his own inimitable style



John Walt Gragg, long-time volunteer for the Horse Show

Lenoir-News Topic provided this colorful account of equestrian competition in Blowing Rock under the heading "The Tournament at Green Park:"

You ought to have seen it! It was decidedly the most picturesque pageant of the season. From the Hotel piazzas to the white letters Green Park: on the opposite hillside it was one bright flutter of gayety. One would not have thought there were so many people left on the Mountain, but when you collect the guests from all the Hotels and Boarding Houses and bring them all to one point of interest they still make a large crowd.

Green Park's porches were lined with people eager for the beginning of the tournament which was to take place in the road immediately before them. Knights with gay sashes were dashing up and down, arranging matters and some of them practicing taking the ring.

The three judges sat at the gate. Mr. L.L. Jenkins, of Gastonia, handsomely mounted, acted as Marshall. Across the road on the green were lines of carriages filled with pretty girls, whose gay dresses and fluttering parasols contributed to the gay scene. The weather was perfect, a shower at noon having laid the dust, everything was favorable.

We were predicting of course that our townsmen, the Messrs. Henkel would be the winners, but noting their sash-less appearance and inquiring the cause, we learned that they were unanimously "ruled out." Their past laurels in this line make them dreaded as opponents by the young gallants less experienced.

There were twelve or more riders who after a great deal of maneuvering and preparation finally drew up a line before the judges for "rules and regulations" and then began the grand contest in earnest. Some fine riding was done by Messrs. Robert Craig, Deal, Taylor, Councills, Chatham and others. The victory was won however by Mr. R. Craig, who at the Tournament ball at the Blowing Rock Hotel last night crowned as Queen of Love and Beauty, Miss Wheatley of Georgia.

We learn that Misses Nellie Tate of Charlotte, Thurman of Mississippi, Bertha Smith of Salisbury, were chosen as maids of honor by Messrs. Deal, Chatham and Councill, the three next highest contestants respectively.

I could not help thinking how pretty a bicycle parade might be at the same place and surroundings.

After the tournament proper was over, the Messrs. Henkel and T. Craig made several runs 'just for fun.' They all acquitted themselves with their accustomed skill and made the young victors in the real contest glad they were ruled out."

Throughout activities like the Horse Show, the local citizens participated to the extent their finances allowed. *The Rocket's* feature on Blowing Rock night life in 1938 stressed this point.

There is, of course, night life of a sort if you're not particular about the social circle in which you move. This is not snobbery, but the simple truth. But it's so mixed that everybody goes, from United States Senators, Appalachian College students, rich Florida vacationers, local business persons, and the maid next door. You won't be noticed so go anywhere you please.

Out Mayview-way the dance is \$1.25 per couple and the beer flows at twenty-five cents a bottle with coca-colas at a thin dime. Over at the Green Park Casino the dance is 50 cents per couple on every night except Saturday when it spins at 80 cents. Eats and drinks follow the same prices as anywhere else.

The Bark, by far the most popular spot on the mountain, no matter what someone might tell you, has a dance each Saturday evening with a script of 75 cents. Then you can dance here any night to music made by dimes inserted in an electric gramophone. The dance ends and the beer stops at 1:30 but you can stay and eat all night. You'll see hundreds of Appalachian College summer students here from over Boone way.¹¹

But opportunity to participate rarely translated into actual participation on behalf of the local people. Money was one problem and values were often another. Despite the jobs created through tourist related construction, many year-round citizens were relatively poor. Furthermore, they often objected to the drinking which was part of the Village social scene.

Mayor D.P. Coffey made the concerns of those left out of the tourist boom his priority. On a social level, he sympathized totally with the anti-alcohol believers. The repeal of Prohibition nationally had translated into a state policy of legal beer and wine sales. Moonshine was still produced illegally, and attempts to suppress the trade could still lead to violence. In June of 1934, Blowing Rock nearly escaped a second Prohibition death. A raid, led by informant

M.S. Phillips of Wilkesboro, uncovered a still in operation which was being worked by, among others, the Teague brothers of Blowing Rock. Before making good their escape, Hal Teague picked up Phillips and threw him bodily into the vat of boiling mash. Phillips was not expected to survive, but he eventually recovered from his burns. Hal Teague was eventually sentenced to a three-year term for assault.¹²

While cottagers would have seen such violence as regrettable and certainly deserving of legal penalties, few would have felt it warranted banning alcohol sales. Many local businessmen also felt that alcohol sales were crucial to the development of Blowing Rock as a tourist mecca. Not so with Mayor D.P. Coffey. Coffey and many local residents saw the need for basic social reform. Mrs. D.P. Coffey became vice-president of a county-wide temperance organization in 1936 which had 3,000 members and could attract one-fifth of the county's total population to its annual Temperance Day Rally. Mayor Coffey was active in efforts to return control over all alcohol sales to the county level, where licensing control could mean effective elimination of sales.¹³

In the Village, as throughout the Southern Highlands, traditionalism and independence were commonly viewed as unalloyed virtues. Cottagers and tourists, however, were often perplexed by the attitudes of natives and these differences inevitably contributed to a certain social distance.

George Morris, a Memphis newspaperman, visited Blowing Rock in 1935 and recorded his impressions of the natives for the benefit of his city readers.

Like it or not, the mountaineer pays no deference to wealth, position, or to his employer. The poor and the rich are all the same to him. He has no resentment against garish display. He simply ignores it. He does not look up to the rich nor down to the poor. You don't get anywhere patronizing him and he mistrusts anyone who attempts to ingratiate himself in his favor. He has his own scale of weights and measures and is in no hurry to form a conclusion. He places no value on time. An article may require months to make and is sold on a basis of profit on the cost of materials.

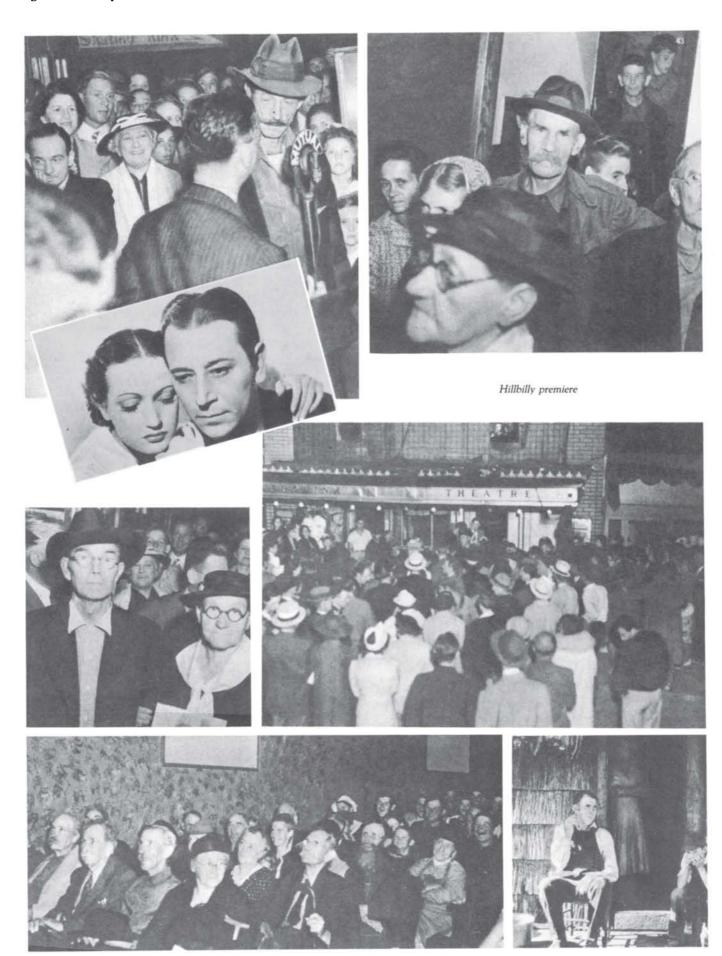
The question of 'supporting' a family does not enter into the economy of the mountaineer. His woman works and so do the children. Each makes a contribution to the support of the family. The larger it is the better they get along. It is not a question of more mouths to feed but more hands to work. An economist might find it interesting to compare the so-called primitive mode of life, in which everyone contributes to his own support, with the modern and more civilized method in which 'nobody works but father.' The conclusion depends upon whether the point of view is contentment and happiness or the advancement of civilization.¹⁸

Morris was not alone in contrasting Blowing Rock's "contentment" with civilization's "advancement." In 1938, Hollywood made use of "Blowing Rock primitives" to publicize one of their own celluloid versions of reality. The movie was *Spawn of the North* starring George Raft and Dorothy Lamour, and the gimmick was to premiere it before a crowd composed entirely of people who had never seen a talking film before. Two hundred and forty-five people were rounded up from the countryside around Blowing Rock and invited into the Carolina Theatre on Main Street, where they were greeted by the national news media. On the one hand, Blowing Rock felt privileged to be selected as the first small town to experience a major film premiere. On the other hand, the news dispatches which resulted emphasized the "quaint backwardness" of the mountain people.¹⁹

On foot, in trucks, and even in covered wagons they came, these mountain folks whose Americanism dates back three centuries—lean, deep-eyed men, their women, their young uns, and even their dogs—frightened, barkless dogs that seemed to wonder what got into their masters to cause them to traipse over the crest of the Blue Ridge after sundown.

Back in the mountains, as the never-lifting base of the Great Smokies wrapped tightly around their shanties, were others who, having never seen a movie, refused flatly to budge from their hearths. One lady sent word that she had lived 80 years without ever being in one of them places and she wouldn't take no chance of dying in a show house.

And old Mrs. Gregg, hobbling on her one crutch and having the time of her eighty years, and Lum Coffey, scarred with half a dozen cuts from the rare razoring he had given himself in order to be all spruced up for the biggest event Blowing Rock ever knew, not excluding the summer of '96 when John D. Rockefeller came here.



All during the two hours of the show, a crowd of several hundred reporters from the swank Blowing Rock hotels stood outside, held back by ropes and by one big and startled policeman. It was the biggest thing Blowing Rock, and maybe the whole bloomin' Blue Ridge, had seen in a coon's age.²⁰

The Watauga Democrat's headlined account of the premiere, "Same Old Story," reflected the disappointment and disgust of many Blowing Rock people. Twenty years before, Mayor Sudderth had railed against the exploitation of "primitive mountaineer" stereotypes by overzealous northern missionaries.

Blowing Rock could have had its own movie star if the dreams of a young girl had come true. Four years before the film premiere, young Mary Johnson of Blowing Rock hitch-hiked from Blowing Rock to Hollywood in search of fame and fortune. Just in case she got lonely she took her twelve-year-old brother David with her. United Press International released the following account of the incredible journey on October 11, 1934:

Mary Johnson, 14, did not get into the movies after hitch-hiking across the continent but she found Filmland's hospitality good enough for food, a coat, four dresses besides shoes and stockings.

Her father, a carpenter, was out of a job and her mother is dead, so with \$1.50 between them she and her brother, David, 12, started from Blowing Rock, N.C. early in September to find their aunt, May Johnson, who lives on the edge of San Francisco.

David was left behind in El Paso when they tried to hop a freight train, and only Mary succeeded. She left the train at Berkley and hitch-hiked here.

'I though I'd get in the films, so I went to Paramount,' she related. 'But that didn't work. So I went to Columbia.' 'Oh, they are swell,' said Mary, 'and I guess they will find our aunt.'

She expressed some concern for her brother, but added: 'David's smart, he will be all right.'

A New Community Landmark

Grover Robbins returned to the mayor's office in 1939 and aggressively resumed the promotion of tourism. In that year, the town could boast that, "The resort proper counts four square miles populated by about 3,000 citizens during the summer months. Over 200 cottages, inns, and three main hotels accommodate people from all parts of the United States and some foreign countries. The cottage colony draws its representation mainly from fifteen states, North Carolina first with 72 cottagers, Florida second with 14, South Carolina third with 11, Washington D.C. and New York have 5 each."²¹

Even the worst flood in the Village's history couldn't slow tourism's growth. A torrential downpour, which peaked on August 13, 1940, hit Watauga County with flooding accounting for sixteen deaths. Blowing Rock was spared any fatalities, but telegraph and telephone lines were swept down and the road to Lenoir was eroded heavily and

had to be closed. An \$80,000 hydroelectric plant at Shulls Mill was washed completely away, and a backup plant of New River Power and Light located at Middle Fork was put out of operation. Blowing Rock's sole source of power was a small diesel station on Mayview Lake, and it could only light a portion of the town at a time. The water filtration plant was also damaged, and hotels and homes were warned to hoard water for several days after the flood. The villagers took the event calmly, mopping floors, and bailing out chimneys while waiting for the deluge to pass.²²

One victim of the flooding to later be reincarnated was Tweetsie Railroad. The small train, which had been in operation since 1881, was many things to many people. She carried

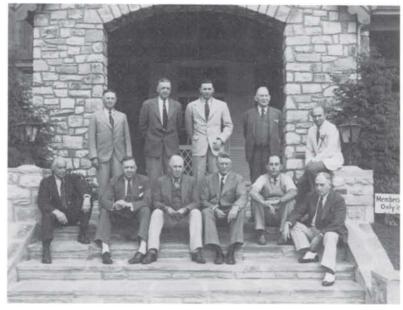


all forms of domestic freight from cloth and thread to furniture and food. Small farmers relied on the train to ship produce to market. The steps for passengers were sometimes nothing more than a "wave down" along the tracks by a farmer headed for town. The route of the train was through gaps, across high trestles, along the ridges and through numerous tunnels. It was always an exciting ride. However high water had washed out much of the sixty-six miles of track between Boone and Johnson City, Tennessee and the closing of the Cranberry Coal and Iron Company in 1929, left to be transported only the mail, some logging work and passengers, who, in increasing numbers, purchased automobiles. The East Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to abandon the line in the winter of 1940. Watauga County representatives protested vigorously, and offered the following statistics to demonstrate the importance of the rail line to the region. During the 1939-1940 year, outgoing freight included "150 standard cars of livestock, 500 tins apples, 4,000 tons cabbage, 3,000 tons potatoes, 900 tons tobacco, 690 tons kraut, and 1,500 carloads of timber. Incoming freight included approximately 4,775 tons of coal, 3,800 tons of fertilizer, 75 cars of autos, 450 tons of cement, 510 tons of brick and tile, 200 tons roofing, 550 tons feed and seed, 180 tons plaster, 200 tons gas, and a huge amount of highway surfacing stone and asphalt."²³

Railroad spokesmen acknowledged that they could probably make a profit on goods shipped into the region, but argued that the decline in the timber industry had made return trips a losing proposition and the line was financially untenable as a whole. The I.C.C. agreed, and motor trucks replaced trains as the county's freight carriers. August 13, 1940 was the last run for Tweetsie for many years.²⁴

The year of the flood may have marked the destruction of one mountain landmark, but it ushered in the beginning of another: the Blowing Rock Country Club. In 1939, a subscription drive for the facility had begun among a group of about sixty cottagers. By the next summer, enough money had been raised to purchase approximately six acres of land adjacent to the Green Park-Norwood Golf Course. The Blowing Rock Country Club was incorporated with the following slate of officers: J. Luther Snyder - President; Martin L. Cannon - Vice-President; F.G. Harper, Sr. Vice-President; David Ovens - Vice President; Charles G. Beck - Treasurer; C.V. Henkel, Jr. - Secretary. Mrs. Robert (Myra) Mebane would be the Club's first manager-hostess. In fact, she, her assistant Bill Brown, and a black cook named Jessie were the Club's entire initial staff.

Mr. Snyder struck the first blow at groundbreaking ceremonies in June, 1940, and the building was completed the following year. Mr. A.G. Weaver of Blowing Rock supervised the construction, which was completed in 182 working days at a cost of \$40,000. The three-floored clubhouse was rustic in style and utilized native stone and panelled pine. At the front, a terrace of Flagstone reached from one end of the building to the other. On the right was the ballroom, a huge two-story affair of pine-wood stained a light green with panels of a darker green. Mirrors



Country Club Board of Directors (left to right, front row): Frank C. Brown, C.V. Henkel, Jr., Luther Snyder, unknown, Barney Garrison, David Ovens, (top): unknown, F.G. Harper, James Harris, Charles G. Beck, Anthony Panuch



J. Luther Snyder



hung at both ends of the room to add depth. From the six French doors leading to the terrace hung lemon yellow curtains of a rough weave. The fireplace extended one full story up the room. The floor was a brilliant oak hardwood.

The grill room downstairs could seat fifty people. This room was decorated in cream and unstained wood panels hung with hunting prints. Although the golf course remained under separate ownership, the golf shop was moved to the clubhouse and the holes were numbered to allow play to begin and end there. George Blagg was employed as the first pro.

The Country Club had its gala official opening on July 4, 1941 with an orchestra and reception for four hundred guests. It was an auspicious beginning for the newest jewel in Blowing Rock's social crown. The next thirty-three years would see the Club host elaborate parties, visits from Metropolitan Opera stars, and even a visit from Mrs. Woodrow Wilson on August 1, 1947. A tragic fire would destroy the original clubhouse on September 21, 1974, but thousands of happy memories would live on in the minds and hearts of members and guests.²⁵

A most engaging tribute to the Club was given by an anonymous writer to the The Blowing Rocket in 1941:

With the opening of the Club there comes to the Rock a new sort of laziness and happiness and fun that we have needed badly for such a long time. With the Club comes cool afternoons spent on the terrace, watching the foursome on the golf course, and while you will rather envy their game you wouldn't trade your chair on the terrace for a fairway. Sitting beside you will be a friend....

You chat if you want and then somehow both of you will realize that speech is an incidental thing and you'll lapse into silence and look at the mountains thinking how perfect this isolated mountain village is from the mad dilettanting of the world. Watching the sun slip over the mountain on its way to the other world you'll hear a car door slam and a group of young people will come dashing in with screams of laughter, go racing down the steps to the grill for a little danceable music and something to eat and drink before going home to dress for dinner.

Then soft from the lounging room of the Club you'll hear the subdued chatter of people relaxing, people anxious to forget business and war and all the little things that makes enjoyment more pleasant when forgotten. And then suddenly you'll realize that it's time to slip out of the shadow that you are sitting in and move on to supper and various other things. You'll get up and stretch and walk over to your car and maybe won't think about the Club anymore until you reach that little period between wakefulness and sleep and then you'll realize that you were completely relaxed and oblivious to the world. There on the terrace of the Club you had found a certain goodness of life in quiet, in shadows, in peace that comes through forgetfulness...in pleasure that comes from deep-rooted enjoyment. You realize that the Club gave that hour to you and you are happy.²⁶

If anything had been needed to complete Blowing Rock's attraction as a resort, the Country Club fulfilled that need. Enhanced by increased accessibility from the Blue Ridge Parkway, continued growth was assured. The Chamber of Commerce reported a 25% increase in tourism from 1940 to 1941, with predictions of better things to come.²⁷ Grover

Robbins joined a promotional bus tour which traveled throughout Florida and the southeast in 1940 and 1941. His objective was to enlighten lowlanders about the virtues of Blowing Rock as a complete tourist resort and as the perfect spot for second home development. Indeed, he was so successful that at times it seemed as though half of Florida summered in the North Carolina mountains.²⁸ The Chamber of Commerce adopted the theme of "Blowing Rock, North Carolina, Nature's Air-Conditioned Resort in the Holiday Highlands."

One of the first infusions of Florida development capital came in 1935 when C.B. Moak and Douglas Felix of Miami purchased a fifty-acre tract across Highway 321 from Chetola and subdivided it for seasonal homes.²⁹ With continued improvement in the interstate highway system, more and more Floridians made the summer trip north. Mayview Manor scored a coup when they enticed Milton M. Chapman to serve as their summer director. Chapman was Managing Director of the Miami Biltmore and brought with him a roster of several dozen wealthy families who would spend their winters at the Biltmore and their summers at Blowing Rock.³⁰ In 1944 and again in 1946, the president of the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce was Frank W. Webster, a Miami real estate developer who established a Blowing Rock partnership with local realtor Lloyd Robbins. Webster was a long-time summer resident who maintained his permanent address in Florida.³¹ Businesses as well as real estate were often owned by out-of-staters. The Barked Inn and the Skyland Inn, two of the Village's older establishments, were purchased by different Fort Lauderdale businessmen in 1945.³²

Supporting Our Boys Over There

The Second World War affected Blowing Rock much more than did World War I, twenty-five years before. By 1940, the Village's population had grown to 655. The increased population, and the greater manpower demands of the conflict, meant that Village men would be scattered from the Battle of the Bulge to Guadalcanal. Wartime rationing would affect the people back home as well. Many women left their homes to enter the local work force. Others, like Sue Coffey, spent part of the war years welding airplane wings in factories for use in air battles overseas.³³

For many townspeople the war effort began well before Pearl Harbor. In 1940, the Blowing Rock Presbyterian Church donated over half the county's Red Cross quota for the relief of civilian war sufferers overseas. The Mayview Manor went further and donated its ballroom and orchestra for a Red Cross charity dance.³⁴ In the summer of 1941, a local chapter of the Bundles for Britian program was founded, with Dr. Mary Cabell Warfield as Chairman, Mrs. Hal Martin as Secretary, and Miss Lena Reeves as Treasurer.³⁵ The Green Park-Norwood Golf Course held a benefit tournament that same summer in conjunction with the new Country Club for the British War Relief Society.

Rationing also began before our official entry into the war. Beginning in the summer of 1941, gas stations were closed from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. to conserve fuel.³⁷ In 1942, Blowing Rock began to experience the scarcities that often accompany war. Tires were strictly rationed and spare tires were a thing of the past. When innertubes were unavailable, tires were packed with sawdust. Gasoline rationing threatened to wreck the town's economy, so Walter Keys, pastor of Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church, headed a delegation to Washington to ask for help. A decision of Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, whose wife had earlier visited Blowing Rock, to increase the ration of fuel to area service stations was viewed as an economic necessity.³⁸ A forty miles-per-hour speed limit was enforced, however, and gasoline was still restricted for non-commercial use. Forty-two people were charged with illegal pleasure driving throughout the county in 1942 and twenty-six of those lost their ration books as a result.⁴⁰ When grease for automotive lubrication ran low, some people discovered that a concoction of mud and chicken manure would act as a substitute. On a warm day, it soon became possible to smell a visitor's car almost before it could be seen.⁴¹

The sugar ration started at one pound per week; coffee was one pound per person (fifteen years old or older) every five weeks.⁴² Lard and meat were also restricted, although most local families were able to supplement their store bought meat with local livestock to avoid the shortages. Molasses was a popular substitute for sugar, both for local cooks and illegal distillers. The *Watauga Democrat* warned, "The booze makers bought up so much of the molasses that stocks are dwindling, sending the price of the sticky brown stuff up. Where molasses formerly sold for 75 cents a gallon, the prices now (1942) range from \$1 to \$1.50."⁴⁴

Perhaps the ultimate bureaucratic boondoggle was a two-month ban on the production of sliced bread in January and February of 1943. Washington determined that sliced bread went stale more quickly than unsliced loaves, and required the use of more wax paper wrapping. This sacrifice quickly proved too unpopular, though, and was shortly lifted.⁴⁵

Despite gasoline shortages, tourism never stopped. People managed to save enough coupons to buy fuel to get to Blowing Rock, and then they settled in for the summer. While weekend tourism virtually disappeared, loyal seasonal residents kept the economy going.

Those who stayed behind did their part to supply the soldiers and assist with the war effort. Mrs. Thomas Coffey directed a Red Cross knitting program. Ho Blowing Rock Boy Scout Troop 42 collected rags, paper, and scrap metal. Tolyde Dula and Jack Rainey provided recycling centers at their service stations, and turned in 16,000 pounds of scrap rubber apiece in 1942. Ernestine Alexander supervised a surgical dressing room in the Watauga Grill which had twenty-six volunteer workers and produced thousands of dressings for shipment overseas.

So many Blowing Rock men served bravely and were decorated for valiant action that a comprehensive listing would be difficult. Lt. William Perry Kephart, naval aviator and son of Dr. and Mrs. A.P. Kephart of Camp Yonahlossee, became the first Watauga County man to die in action in July, 1943, near Guadalcanal. He was honored by having a destroyer escort christened in his name, the U.S.S. Kephart, on January 7, 1944.⁵⁰

A letter written by Private Grover Robbins, Jr., after he was wounded on Iwo Jima, expresses eloquently the reality of battle thousands of miles from home.

Your letters mention that I was lucky. I was luckier than you will ever know for when I was hit I was holding a grenade with the pin out and dropped it somewhere near me. The bullet and muzzle blast from the Nip's gun knocked me down and while I was down the grenade went off but all I got was a bad shaking up. This is harder to get over than the other, and every now and then I pinch myself to be sure I am alive....

Everyone wonders what combat is like and if I ever get back I will tell you all about it as I don't feel any aversion at all to talking about it. The worst of it is not the natural hardships such as sleeping on the ground, going without food and water, lying around in shell holes with stinking dead Japs. All of these things and many more you get used to and don't even mind them. The worst of it is the fear that builds up in you every day, and every time a man gets hit around you it gets worse and worse until finally it is just impossible to describe. Everyone feels it without exception and a great many men crack up and have to be sent back.

I don't think there is a man living who wouldn't break down if he stayed in it long enough. I don't think there was a man on Iwo who had been in the front for several days, but what would have gladly traded even an arm or a leg to get out of it. I caught myself thinking how much better time a one-legged man could have than a dead one.⁵¹

To commemorate the contributions of Blowing Rock's service men and women the American Legion Post 256 was established in 1946, with Fred Penley serving as its first Commander. In 1952, Post 256 was granted a 99-year lease on a piece of town property located just west of the Park. Members immediately began the task of completing a long-held dream, the construction of a permanent Legion Building. With local money, material, and Legion labor, this mission was accomplished and on August 20, 1959, the first Legion meeting was held in its new home.⁵²

This property was available as a result of one of the last acts of Grover Robbins as Mayor. The downtown property, on which Tom Coffey's Watauga Inn had stood, was the perfect place for a community center. Robbins, as mayor and president of the Chamber of Commerce, lobbied hard for the purchase of the property by the town. On April 3, 1945, a special referendum was held on a bond issue for the purchase of the Coffey property. The vote was 141 in favor of the purchase; 51 opposed. On August 18, 1945, the deed for the Watauga Inn grounds passed to the Village of Blowing Rock. New downtown buildings could be erected for the Chamber of Commerce and the town government. Most importantly, the bulk of the land, in the heart of the Village, was preserved for public enjoyment and recreation. A Park and Recreation Commission was established which was composed of Mrs. Joseph Cannon, Mrs. W.K. Keys, Grover Robbins, W.B. Castle, Reverend Walter Keys, and F.W. Webster. The Commission quickly employed a landscape architect to prepare a master plan for the park area. Early plans called for a children's playground, tennis courts, shuffleboard, and horseshoe pitching facilities. The park was to be a living memorial to all who served in the armed forces during World War II.

Grover Robbins would go on to serve as mayor in 1945, 1947, and 1948 before stepping down from local political office. Of his many acts promoting and supporting the Village he so loved, the Blowing Rock Park may be his most fitting memorial.⁵³

Something Old and Something New



Square dancing at The Legion Hall

As the new decade approached, technology would play a major role in shaping the town's future outlook. While cottagers and tourists had traditionally influenced the values and lifestyles of yearround residents, their influence would pale beside that of the new medium of television. For good or for bad, or perhaps something in-between, the first television set came to Blowing Rock on July 13, 1949. It was installed by Rhonda L. Coffey of R and G Electric Company, the community's first television dealer. J.R. Boyd, proud owner of the first set, had only one problem, but it was a substantial one. There was nothing to watch except the test pattern because the state's first television station in Charlotte didn't begin transmitting until July 15, 1949.

Even the clear test pattern on the screen was a relief to townspeople because there had been dire predictions by some that television would not work satisfactorily in the high mountains. Charlotte broadcasters were exuberant over learning that reception was so good over a hundred miles away.⁵²

The following year, another newcomer arrived in the Village. Unlike the newfangled television set, John Goodwin brought with him 175 years of tradition, spanning seven generations. Goodwin Guild Weavers, and its patriarch John Goodwin, moved to Blowing Rock from Virginia at the urging of Grover Robbins. Goodwin brought with him wooden shuttle looms that were over 100 years old and "drafts" (weaving patterns) that he and his father had collected in travels throughout Southern Appalachia and Pennsylvania. Goodwin Guild Weavers was truly a family business, and the beautiful quilts and afghans which they produced became an important part of Blowing Rock's link to its cultural heritage.



John Goodwin (center with glasses) is pictured with fellow officers of The Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce (left to right): Bob Hardin, Howard Barnwell, Mrs. H.F. Custer, Luther H. Smith, and Eli Mattar



John Goodwin

Camp Life

As Blowing Rock developed as fascinating and urbane people from Two such people were educators Dr. In 1921, Dr. Kephart served as Director Children's Camp near Philadelphia tutor. It was while working at this beginning a girls camp in the Blue which would embody their informal learning.⁵³

The idea became reality in the accident that Kephart met W.L. on Pine Ridge known as North Side north of Blowing Rock on the Shulls to sell the land to Kephart who replete with a lake, cabins, athletic were hired to build the cabins with Kepharts were early pioneers in a be visible in the south. They were climate and terrain of the Southern summer camps.⁵⁵



Camp Yonahlossee girls on The Blowing Rock in the late 1930s

a tourist mecca, a wide variety of around the world visited the Village. and Mrs. A.P. Kephart of Greensboro. of Activities of the Montessori and his wife was the Camp's head camp that they conceived the idea of Ridge Mountains of North Carolina educational ideals of recreation and

summer of 1922. It was quite by Winkler, the owner of a tract of land Farm. The farm was located five miles Mill Road. Winkler eventually agreed intended to build a summer camp, courts, and stables.⁵⁴ Local residents lumber cut from the property. The movement that was just beginning to among the first to discover that the Highlands was ideally suited for

Camp Yonahlossee offered the usual camp activities of swimming, horseback riding, hiking, outdoor cooking, weaving, and pottery. The purpose of the camp was to give young girls an "opportunity to get away from the idleness of vacation time to a place where worthwhile activities not available during the school year may serve to build strong bodies and at the same time provide new ideas and ideals." ⁵⁶ Campers were encouraged to be independent, considerate and respectful of others, and to appreciate nature.

Camp Yonahlossee accepted girls between the ages of 7 and 17. Meals were served family style and the girls "bunked" with campers in their age group. A "Big Sister" program insured that the older campers looked after the younger ones. The majority of the campers came from North Carolina, but there were also girls from South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Iowa, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Washington, D.C. In the early years, campers arrived by bus or train and were picked up at the Charlotte or Greensboro airports. Camp Yonahlossee hosted several girls from foreign countries and it was not uncommon to see children of celebrities at the camp. General Westmoreland, Chief of Staff of the Armed Services, sent his daughter to "Camp Y" as did Bob Schieffer, CBS News correspondent. One year Roger Mudd's daughter was put on the waiting list because the camp was filled to capacity. All of the girls, regardless of background, were given the same experiences — all were "roughing it," living in cabins with no glass windows and sleeping in army bunks.⁵⁷

Camp Yonahlossee was somewhat unusual in that in the early years they raised much of their own food. Fine milk cows, large gardens, lambs, beef cattle, chickens and apple orchards "insured the finest of eats to those who come to the camp." Campers worked in the gardens, helping to gather the vegetables. The girls were taught how to string beans, shuck corn, and shell peas. This was one way the camp got through the Depression years. 59

When the camp first opened, Dr. Kephart traveled throughout the months of March, April, and May recruiting girls for the summer. The camp was originally designed to house 100 campers and employ a staff of 40. Because it was the Kepharts' intention to operate a camp where girls were guaranteed individual attention, many campers had to be turned away. According to an article in the *Watauga Democrat* announcing the opening of the camp, "a very democratic organization of the camp government and activities will permit participation on the part of campers in the discretion and control of awards, penalties, and camp citizenship. A chief and her council, The Camp Pow Wow (the legislative body), and distinctive Indian names for the rough little bungalows will insure a form of life removed from the artificialities of home and school." By 1938, then in its 16th season, Camp Yonahlossee included "an



Counselors at Camp Yonahlossee

area of 150 acres, stables for 16 horses, a large farm house, 24 small cabin units for campers' sleeping quarters, an infirmary, an office cabin, a nature cabin, a crafts cabin, a weaving room, a sevenroom dining and kitchen unit, a three-room recreational hall, and a three-room building called 'The Castle." Other physical facilities included two shower houses with flush toilets and hot and cold water, a two-car garage, an automatic lighting plant, and a private water system.60 Camp Y offered a well-rounded activity program which included: "Daily devotions, camp fire recreational and inspirational programs, swimming, canoeing, horseback

riding, outdoor sports, indoor games, dramatics, stunts, archery, nature craft, arts and crafts, hiking, music, outdoor cooking, woodcraft, dancing, first aid, fire building, tennis, skating, and diving."⁶¹

Camp Yonahlossee became a source of genuine pride to the community. The Kepharts were admired and respected for their efforts and in 1951, *The Blowing Rocket* praised them for what they had achieved at the camp: "With their educational background the Kepharts have succeeded in making their camp program fun and adventure for campers and at the same time a program of informal education with definite results of wholesome changes in personality and character."

A second summer camp established in Blowing Rock was the ill-fated Camp Cherokee. Built by Mr. and Mrs. T.E. Hodgkins with encouragement from Mrs. Bertha Cone, Camp Cherokee was a girls' camp which only operated for a few summers. After the Hodgkins experienced financial difficulty in 1941, Blowing Rock native Wade Brown purchased the farm on which Camp Cherokee had been located. Brown, one of the area's best-known attorneys and author of the delightful Reminiscence of a Country Boy and Small Town Lawyer, sold eighteen acres of the property in 1944 to a most unusual woman, Vera Lachmann. Dr. Lachmann was born in Germany in 1904, the daughter of a highly cultured family of German-Jewish aristocracy. She was awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Berlin in 1931. She wanted to be a teacher and she began her professional career at the Odenwaldschule, a residential school in southern Germany which was founded on the principles of international understanding, tolerance, and the humanitarian tradition of enlightenment. In 1933, she defiantly opened a small, private school for the children of Jewish parentage who had been forced from the public schools by the Nazis. With the outbreak of hostilities which led to World War II, Dr. Lachmann's school was closed. During Hitler's reign of terror, Lachmann worked to place Jewish children in homes abroad. She reluctantly fled her beloved Germany in 1939 and would never return to see her homeland. She came to America and immediately found employment opportunities in higher education. Her first teaching position was at Vassar College, but she subsequently taught at Salem College, Bryn Mawr, Yale, and the public colleges of New York City. She spent her summers working at summer camps in New York and New Hampshire.⁶³

It was through Professor and Mrs. Clemens Sommer of Chapel Hill that Lachmann first learned about the delightful summer climate in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. In 1943, she rented a cottage with the Sommers in Black Mountain and, as natives like to say, "she was hooked." One summer of cool mountain breezes and picturesque scenery sparked an idea which would become an all-consuming passion; she would open a summer camp for boys in the Blue Ridge!⁶⁴

And thus Camp Catawba was born. Vera Lachmann had made a long journey from German aristocracy to camping in the Blue Ridge. It was surely a trip filled with excitement and a sense of accomplishment that is often the teacher's primary reward. Her tenure as Director of Camp Catawba would turn out to be almost as turbulent as her life in Nazi Germany.

Camp Catawba was established during the spring of 1944. It was named in honor of Thomas Wolfe's "Old Catawba," the name used for North Carolina in his classic novel *Look Homeward Angel*. During the first years, the Camp experienced all sorts of problems with provisions, water supply, and telephones. In a letter to a friend, Vera writes: "My mountain top is uniquely lovely, my youngsters a delight, my helpers self-respecting and trustworthy. But none of us know how to cook, or has any idea of how to buy food in quantity, or of keeping accounts. We have almost no running water. We must pump it up instead. For marketing there are very few places and the lack of a telephone is a real difficulty." Conditions improved quickly, because the following year the town gave the camp permission to pipe city water up the hill and a telephone was installed.

The families who lived near the Camp were "important to the physical well-being of Catawba." They were helpful and generous. Vera wrote to a friend of their willingness to help: "Fred Span is trimming the apple trees and finishing up the road. The Greenes are loaning us a washing machine, provided we do their washing with ours. Through the Bolicks' great kindness and Mr. Greene's good connections, the Chamber of Commerce is giving me an address list. Yesterday I sent off two hundred prospectuses. Everything is going ahead properly."

According to Dr. Charles Miller, who is a former camper at Catawba and author of the informative and entertaining A Catawba Assembly, "throughout its existence Catawba was essentially an enclave of northerners in the Southern Highlands." The camp was so predominantly northern that two campers from South Carolina were once asked what foreign country they came from. Some of the campers came from poverty, others from wealth. At first, children of poor but highly cultured German-Jewish refugees came to the Camp. Later many came from affluent families in New York and Washington. During the first five years, the average number of campers was twelve. The number increased to thirty during later years. Camper ages ranged from five to thirteen.

Ira Bolick and his wife lived on the road where Camp Catawba was located. Ira was born at Flannery Fork and his wife in Blowing Rock. This mountain couple had a profound effect on the young campers and on the staff as well. They were described by the campers as being fiercely independent and self-confident, and possessing a strong sense of belonging to the land. "Their lives had a wholeness that counselors from the camp found nowhere else." One former camper tells of what the Bolicks meant to him: "You couldn't get close to these proud and reserved people, but their kindness was a bridge to all strangers. I admired the dignity of their gestures and their speech and the timelessness of their concerns and doings. They took care of their animals, their grain, corn, peaches, their trees and flowers in the same manner they raised their children. Their quiet way of working was like breathing, without complaint and without stopping as long as they had life. Their attitude and their life style are unforgettable to me." One of the province of the

Like the girls at Camp Yonahlosee, the boys at Catawba attended the annual Blowing Rock Horse Show. This was an eagerly awaited event. The campers maintained a strong interest in riding primarily for the purpose of participating in the Show. Vera wrote the parents that "the boys looked deceivingly respectable when they went off to mix with high society, buy Coca-Cola, and watch the horses and thousands of spectators."

Camp Catawba was remembered by former campers as being distinctly European-American, in sharp contrast to the other Blowing Rock camps. There were "all kinds of German influence, love of the classical world, a kind of 'wandervogel' enthusiasm about hiking, and so on." Dramatics was one activity in which all campers participated. Some of the campers found it hard to believe that they were rehearsing Greek plays amidst the splendor of the Blue Ridge Mountains and according to one camper, "Few people in Blowing Rock found it easy to believe either. But they evidently did not much mind it, or if so did not disturb the camp on that account." 68

While the relationship between Blowing Rock and Camp Catawba was generally supportive, it was not altogether without controversy. In 1951, Vera Lachmann embarked on a plan to integrate the Camp. An article that year in *The Blowing Rocket* had praised the Camp for its values and standards and went on to mention that soon "color will be no bar to admission to the camp." According to Miller, Lachmann was torn between her desire to integrate the Camp and her desperate desire to live in harmony with the town and with her neighbors. The primary concern of



Dr. Lachmann leads campers on a hike up Grandfather Mountain

and luck, not on techniques of modern management."

Blowing Rock citizens and officials was that Lachmann intended to use the private Camp as a base for social change in the community. According to Reverend Ward Courtney, minister of St. Mary's of the Hills Episcopal Church at the time, "although there was some initial resentment of Catawba's policy, and the expectation by some people of an 'invasion,' any statements that sounded offensive were merely questions about Lachmann's intentions."

When the Camp enrolled its first black camper in 1964, the "town authorities accepted the Camp's policy and practices and agreed to cooperate with them." In return, the town was assured that Catawba did not intend to use the policy as an overt means of effecting social change in the community.⁷¹

Catawba operated for twenty-seven years under Lachmann's exuberant guidance and compassion. Miller notes with affection that "Catawba survived on love

A third camp, one which brought physically handicapped young people to Blowing Rock, was Camp Sky Ranch, which opened in 1948. The Camp was the dream of Jack B. Sharp, a Winston-Salem bus driver who was involved in an accident which left him temporarily paralyzed. It was while he was in the hospital recovering from this accident, faced with the possibility that he might never walk again, that he began to dream of a camp for handicapped children. He dreamed of a place for them to go during the summer months where they could have the same experiences as "normal" children. He shared his dream with a close friend, Marvin Culbreth. Culbreth, whose younger brother was left paralyzed after an attack of polio, knew from first-hand experience that such a camp was needed. The two immediately began to turn the dream into reality.⁷²

With the help of several of North Carolina humanitarians, Culbreth and Sharp purchased 145 acres of secluded land off Flannery Fork Road near the Moses H. Cone Estate about five miles west of Blowing Rock. With an elevation of 3,500 feet and an average summer temperature of 70 degrees, the site was "perfect" for Sharp's project. The Charlotte Observer reported enthusiastically about the new Camp: "The surrounding mountains abound with wildlife, both plant and animal. Hundreds of birds can be seen and their song fills the air with music each morning and evening. Bass and trout are plentiful in the mountain streams for the little fellow who is a potential fisherman."

Although the Camp was started following WWII, when there was a shortage of building materials, humanitarian merchants and manufacturers from across the state donated the necessary construction materials and the Camp was underway. Three large cabins, a kitchen and dining hall, craft house, and office building were completed during the winter of 1948. Construction of the Camp was supervised by the North Carolina Board of Health and it received their "A-1" rating. All the buildings had ramps which made it easier for the campers who had difficulty walking and climbing stairs. When it opened, it was the only camp for crippled children in the entire southeast.⁷⁴

From the beginning, Camp Sky Ranch was a success. Because of the Camp's noble purpose, people in Blowing Rock gave it their unqualified support. Word soon spread about the Camp and children enrolled from across the state. Some were from affluent families; others were sponsored by friends. Regardless of background, all were treated alike — "from the poor mountain girl who was sent by a neighboring family, to the multi-millionaire's son who has enrolled in the camp for several years." In keeping with our community's tradition of philanthropy, both the Blowing Rock Rotary Club and the Blowing Rock Garden Club sponsored participants. Several religious organizations also helped to provide general support for the Camp or assistance to specific campers.

Over the years, children from all parts of the country have attended Camp Sky Ranch. The number of participants grew from twelve the first year to 230 in the early '60s.⁷⁶ Initially, the camp was solely for boys, but it later became

co-educational. The purpose of the camp has always been "to help the children develop self-confidence by having them participate in practically all camp activities." These activities included archery, riflery, nature studies, music, camp crafts, horseback riding, boating, and swimming. There were also frequent field trips to the Blowing Rock, the Cone Estate and Grandfather Mountain. Special activities included movies, picnics, dances, scavenger hunts, softball games, blackberry pickings, and overnight camping.⁷⁷

Camp Sky Ranch was not affiliated with a particular church, but emphasized spiritual awareness. Each Sunday morning the campers participated in a hymn singing and conducted their own worship services. In addition, for several years, the children eagerly awaited the arrival of Mrs. Joseph Cannon and her Bible stories. The stone and concrete lake at the camp is named in honor of Mrs. Cannon, because of her sustained enthusiasm and support of the camp.⁷⁸

In 1964, the camp suffered a great loss when its founder and director, Jack B. Sharp, passed away. However, the camp continued to flourish under the direction of Jack's wife and son.⁷⁹

Majestic Grandfather

For over 200 years, naturalists and scientists from around the world have traveled to the Blowing Rock area to visit Grandfather Mountain. Billed as "Carolina's Top Scenic Attraction," the mountain first received attention in 1785 when Andre Michaux, French botanist and explorer, was sent to North America by the French Government to collect botanical specimens. His search carried him to Florida, the Bahamas, the banks of the Mississippi, and eventually to western North Carolina. On August 30, 1794, he recorded in his journal: "climbed to the summit of the highest mountain of all North America, and, with my companion and guide sang the La Marseillaise Hymn and cried, 'Long live America and the French Republic! Long live liberty!' "80 Michaux was wrong about Grandfather Mountain being the highest mountain in North America, but geologists say it is one of the oldest, formed over 140 million years ago. With its unusual rock formations, abundance of flora and wildlife, it is also one of the most interesting peaks of the whole Appalachian chain.

Apparently, the mountain received its name from early pioneer settlers who saw the profile of a bearded grandfather in the rock formations.⁸¹ It was first operated as a tourist attraction in the mid 1930s. In 1935, an old abandoned road which was built in the 1890s was improved and extended to cliffside, the first peak of the mountain. There the Linville Improvement Company constructed a wooden observation tower. To pay for the cost of maintaining the road, the Improvement Company charged motorists a small toll.⁸² Prior to this time, Grandfather was inaccessible to automobiles, but many early residents of Blowing Rock were undeterred. Dr. James Vance, Dr. R. A. Dunn, and Dr. C. G. Vardell all reached the summit by hiking across the rugged terrain of the mountain.⁸³

In 1936, the Linville Improvement Company built a cabin at the upper end of the toll road and sold souvenirs, postcards, photographs, cold drinks and sandwiches.⁸⁴

At this time, the mountain was owned by Hugh MacRae, son of a Wilmington textile and railroading family and founder of the Linville Improvement Company. MacRae was an MIT graduate and came to the North Carolina mountains in search of mica, an important mineral once used in the production of electricity. When he saw the area and its potential for development, he wrote home to his father asking for money to purchase 16,000 acres. He bought the land for a fraction of its worth, paying 25 to 50 cents an acre. MacRae developed and promoted the resort town of Linville and to facilitate travel between Linville and Blowing Rock he built the Yonahlossee Trail (Trail of the Black Bear), now US 221. It took three years to build the 16 mile trail at a reputed cost of \$14,000.85 It operated for several years as a toll road and stage coach line. When Mr. MacRae's daughter, Agnes MacRae, married, the Linville property was deeded to MacRae's son-in-law, Julian W. Morton. On February 19, 1921, the couple had a son and named him Hugh, after his grandfather.86

The young Hugh Morton spent his summers in Linville fishing, swimming, hiking, and taking advantage of all the natural beauty Grandfather had to offer. After graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill, he served as a combat newsreel cameraman, winning a bronze star and purple heart for his gallant efforts in trying to take close-up shots during a battle.⁸⁷

In 1952, the family decided to dissolve the Linville Improvement Company and divide all assets. No one wanted Grandfather Mountain because it wasn't making money. No one, that is, except Hugh Morton. Grandfather became

his primary business interest and Morton set about creating a tourist attraction which was to have a profound impact on Blowing Rock. Yet with all he has accomplished in promoting and developing the mountain, Morton is modest about his ownership of the 5,964 foot peak. In his own words, "I feel like I'm its legal guardian and it's in my care for the time being."88

The first thing Morton did as owner was to extend and pave the gravel road to the mountain's absolute summit, known as Stone Rock. This was the only place on top of the mountain that was suitable for a parking lot, but this one location did not offer the most spectacular view.⁸⁹ The Linville Peak, which was separated from the parking lot by a deep valley, afforded a view which extended 100 miles, encompassing four states.⁹⁰ Morton was faced with a dilemma: how to get visitors from Stone Rock to the famed Linville Peak. His answer was to build a 218-foot suspension bridge. The mile-high swinging bridge was in place within three weeks, having been constructed completely at a factory in Greensboro. It was formally opened in September, 1952. At the time, it was believed to be the highest bridge east of the Mississippi. Tar Heel celebrities and newsmen came from all over the state. William B. Umstead, Democratic nominee for Governor, spoke and as the dedication speeches were being delivered, workmen added the final lengths to the bridge. When they were finished, Mr. Umstead and his daughter were the first to walk across.⁹¹ The bridge was built to withstand the wind, snow, and ice that frequent Grandfather in the winter. It can hold up to 3 million pounds, although only 40 people are allowed to cross at one time. The bridge poses a challenge, one that some are not willing to take. Surveys conducted on the mountain show that 12.7% of the men and 30% of the women who visit Grandfather will not walk across. During that first year of operation, 10,000 visitors came to enjoy the Mountain. By the early '60s Grandfather would entertain 10,000 visitors in a weekend.⁹²

A wildlife commission which was attempting to repopulate the area with bears in the '60s asked Morton if he would purchase two for Grandfather. He agreed and Grandfather Mountain employee, Winston Church, was sent to Atlanta Zoo to pick out a male and female cub. By chance, Church chose a bear raised on a bottle by secretaries at the Zoo. The bears were brought back to Grandfather Mountain with the intention of letting them go. The male bear was released first and has never been seen since. Ten days later, Morton arranged to release the female bear during the filming of a special edition of "The Arthur Smith Show" which was being taped on top of Grandfather for the Charlotte CBS affiliate. Ralph Smith, Arthur's younger brother, planned to sing a song called "The Preacher and The Bear" and the female cub was to be released in the background as this song was being performed. Everyone thought that the cub would run away as soon as she was released. Well, how often do things work the way you plan — especially with television cameras rolling? She hung around the film crew seeking attention. Brother Ralph christened the cub Mildred, calling out the first name that came into his head as he tried to "shoo" her away. The rest, as they say, is history.

After her T.V. debut, Mildred was allowed to roam the Mountain. She stayed on Grandfather for about a week and then decided to visit several homes in nearby Pineola and Linville. She caused such a commotion that she was brought back to the mountain with instructions that if she were to stay at Grandfather, she would have to be confined. With the help of zoo officials from around the country, Morton designed a spacious home for Grandfather's



new 400 pound mascot. Recently celebrating her 21st birthday, Mildred has become a leading feature of Grandfather and each year she welcomes thousands of visitors to the Mountain. While she has given birth to several cubs, she is uniquely different from most bears in that she will adopt and care for orphaned cubs. A gentle and kind "ham," she has been photographed with many famous personalities, making friends with everyone she meets. 94

Mildred's home was the first environmental habitat to be constructed at Grandfather. Later there would be homes for bears, bear cubs, eagles (which were shot and crippled on the west coast), cougars, and white-tailed deer. These habitats have been called "the most beautiful wild animal exhibits in the United States." They consist of "three acres of natural scenery which is completely enclosed by fences and walls that are hidden from the view of visitors." In the habitats, blackberries and huckleberries grow wild and each has its very own trout-filled pool. These habitats give visitors the chance to view and photograph native animals and birds in their natural settings. The settings of the chance to view and photograph native animals and birds in their natural settings.

Not only is Grandfather Mountain the home of Mildred the Bear, but it is also known for the nationally acclaimed events: "Singing on the Mountain," and "The Highland Games and Gathering of Scottish Clans."

Joe Hartley, known affectionately as "The Apostle of Grandfather Mountain," founded the annual event known as the "Singing on the Mountain". It started as a family reunion and grew to include neighbors and friends and now thousands attend each year. In the words of Asheville journalist John Parris, who has done much to promote the annual singing, "they came by wagon, on horseback and afoot. There was dinner on the ground, the mixing and mingling of family, hymn-singing, and some preaching. They had such a good time that Joe L. Hartley, the patriarch of the clan, decided they ought to invite some of their neighbors to the gatherings." Today the tradition he started is known "as the oldest and the biggest old-time singing convention in all the land." Throughout the years, famed athletes, entertainers, politicians, preachers, and singers have hosted the event held every fourth Sunday

in June. There is no charge for this all-day festival of gospel singing and preaching.⁹⁸

In 1965, Billy Graham was the guest speaker and famed country music legend Johnny Cash highlighted the impressive list of musicians. Thousands of people flocked to hear Graham speak and traffic was backed up to Marion, 32 miles away. Parris noted that, at the time, "this was the largest crowd ever assembled in North Carolina and far surpassed the second largest crowd of 57,500 for the Duke-Carolina football game in 1949."99

Bob Hope made an appearance at the annual singing because "servicemen from across the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Virginia often spoke of the singing on the mountain as their annual 'homecoming in the hills' and Hope promised he would revisit them here during a time of peace." 100

The Highland Games, held the second weekend in July, is another family reunion of sorts. It was started in 1956 by two Scottish descendants, Agnes Morton, daughter of Hugh MacRae, and Donald McDonald, a journalist for the *Charlotte News* now living in Scotland. The idea for a gathering began to take place at a party when Morton and McDonald were discussing the similarities between Linville and Scotland; the rugged terrain, wildflowers, fruit, and even the weather. They wanted to do something to commemorate the contribution of the Scots to the heritage of the United States and to keep







alive the Scottish tradition in America." When Mrs. Morton's cousin sent an article about the Highland Games in Scotland they decided this was what they wanted to duplicate in America. Five hundred people attended the very first Grandfather Highland Games; over 40,000 spectators and participants attended the most recent.¹⁰³

Today, the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games and Gathering of Scottish Clans is "not only the largest such gathering in the country, but in the entire world." The event brings a bonnie bit of Scotland to Blowing Rock and thousands of people from all over the world. Members of the clans begin arriving in the area on Thursday evening for the torchlight opening ceremony. On Friday, the entertainment begins with an informal Gaelic Concert, the Ceilidh, and concludes with a Scottish Country dance gala that highlights the ballroom dances of Scotland. Saturday is filled with athletic events and competitions in dancing, piping, and fiddling. Sunday, the final day of the Games, begins with a Scottish worship service, followed by the beautiful and emotional Parade of Tartans.104

The Highland Games is one of the big events of the year and during the second weekend in July, every hotel and motel room in the entire area is filled. In recognition of its popularity, the Highland Games has been awarded the Lynn Nisbet Award (the North Carolina travel industry's salute to the organization that has done the most to promote travel in the state).¹⁰⁵ A prime mover and leader of the games, Nestor J. MacDonald, was honored by Queen Elizabeth as an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Mr. MacDonald said that he was given this award in recognition of the effectiveness of the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.¹⁰⁶ Proceeds from the Games go toward a scholarship fund which sends American students of Scottish descent to Scottish Universities.¹⁰⁷

First blazed in the early 1800s, the twenty miles of hiking trails on Grandfather Mountain also attract thousand of visitors each year.¹⁰⁸ In addition to the mile-high swinging bridge, visitor center, and environmental habitats, Grandfather has a 4,100-acre wilderness area and is also a wildlife refuge and home to many animals including the raven, racoon, opossum, rabbit, and bobcat.¹⁰⁹

Tweetsie Returns

Since the devastating flood of August, 1940, which washed away most of the track between Boone and Cranberry, the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad ceased to operate in Watauga. Affectionately known as "Tweetsie" by the mountain people she served, the small, narrow-gage train went through a number of very sad years during which she served the rayon plants of Elizabethton.

In July of 1950, the ET and WNC disbanded and Tweetsie's future looked dim. Californian Gene Autrey, the famous singing cowboy, heard about the colorful train and immediately began plans to purchase her. His idea was to make her a star in Hollywood westerns.¹¹⁰

Enter Grover Robbins, Jr., son of Blowing Rock's patriarch of tourism. Robbins had ridden the train between Boone and Johnson City as a child. He was passionate about the little train and was determined to keep it in the mountains of western North Carolina. His plan...to bring her back home so people could relive days gone by. He would create the area's first theme park, replete with a frontier village and museum with mementos from the train's journeys.¹¹¹

In 1955 Robbins asked Autry to sell him his option on Tweetsie. After a protracted period of correspondence, Autry acquiesced. This set the stage for Tweetsie's homecoming, May 20, 1956. North Carolina Governor Luther M. Hodges officially declared May 20th as "Tweetsie Homecoming Day" and the little train traveled from Virginia to Hickory via Southern Railway flat-cars.

In Hickory, thousands of peopled lined the tracks as Tweetsie arrived at the station. Area high school bands played strains of "Sentimental Journey" and "Casey Jones." T.V. entertainer Fred Kirby, the man who would later be so instrumental in promoting the train, was among those present and, he too, provided entertainment.¹¹²

The train remained in Hickory for a year and was completely restored at the Carolina and Northwestern Railway. The coaches were once again bright green and "Tweetsie Railway" was printed on each cab in shining gold. Under the watchful eye of Frank Coffey, master mechanic and chief engineer, they strengthened and tested Tweetsie's aged boiler and restored the interiors of the coaches. The old timers exclaimed that she looked better than they had ever remembered.¹¹³

May 23, 1957 was the day chosen to bring Tweetsie up the mountain to Blowing Rock. The forty-mile climb up the Lenoir Mountain was imposing, but Grover Robbins was not discouraged. He found a man willing to tackle the challenge in T. Bragg McLeod, President of the Charlotte firm of Moss Trucking. The 20-foot coal tender, engine, and three 40-foot cars were loaded, with the use of 60 yards of railroad track, onto the flat-bed truck trailers. Hundreds gathered to watch as Tweetsie began the final stretch of her trip.¹¹⁴

When the caravan reached the newly graded road leading up to the new Tweetsie depot, located on 400 acres midway between Boone and Blowing Rock, they were confronted with their first real obstacle. The road was too

steep and too muddy. It was necessary to employ two bulldozers to push each individual unit up the final hill, but Tweetsie did at last return home.115 Tweetsie made an experimental run on her new track later that same summer, on June 30, 1957. Even though her first run was not announced, more than 1000 people watched as thirty lucky passengers rode the train on the three-quarter-mile track.¹¹⁶ "The trip was classified as uneventful except for one woman getting cinders in her hair from the coal-fed boiler which gives Tweetsie her power." Her engineer for the



first trip was Frank Coffey, her conductors, John Broyhill and Ronald Elrod. Over the next few days, over 2000 visitors rode the train. It was evident that Tweetsie was a success.¹¹⁷

During this first year, passengers boarded at the "Tweetsie Station," an exact replica of an old depot once located at Shouns, Tennessee, and disembarked at "Tweetsieville" to enjoy a picnic lunch and to stroll along hiking trails in the cool mountain air. At the entrance, near the train station, Robbins built a frontier village resembling a community of the 1880s. The settlement included an authentic country store, saloon, marshal's office and jail, stage coach, blacksmith shop, Wells-Fargo office and tintype photo shop.¹¹⁸

In 1958, Tweetsie Railroad hosted a party in honor of Fred Kirby's birthday. As part of the celebration, Indians from "Horn in the West" were invited to attack the train as she hauled passengers from the station to Tweetsieville. Most of the passengers were armed with 6-shooters to help Fred Kirby fight off the Indians. Both Fred Kirby and the Indian attack were well received by the visitors and have been a regular feature of the train ride ever since.¹¹⁹

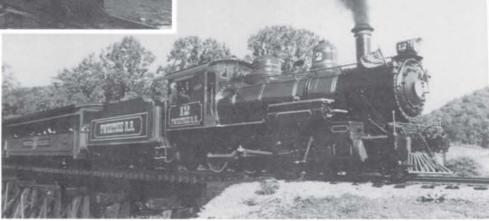
Approximately 71,000 people rode the train during the summer of 1958. In 1959, the Boone Chamber of Commerce honored Tweetsie as one of the outstanding attractions in the Southern Highlands. In 1962, a skyline quarter-mile chairlift was added. The chairlift carried visitors from the Tweetsie Station to the top of Magic Mountain, home of the sleeping giant and location of the ferris-wheel, merry-go-round, and antique vintage automobiles. For many years, the giant's pink castle stood as a landmark to travelers on Highway 321. The Tweetsie Palace was also opened in 1962 and immediately became popular for its authentic can-can girls, singing waiters, and brass band.

Today, Tweetsie follows three miles of track in circling Roundhouse Mountain. She crosses a 225-foot trestle, is attacked by Indians, and held up by train robbers, all within an eighteen minute ride. She makes twelve to twenty-five trips a day, averaging approximately 7500 miles, and over 250,000 passengers pass through the turnstiles annually.

People from all walks of life still come to see and ride Tweetsie. At the Tweetsie Homecoming Celebration in 1956, Governor Hodges said that Tweetsie was destined to become a top tourist attraction. She has done that and much, much more. Tweetsie has provided seasonal jobs for hundreds of young people. It has been an enormous boost to Blowing Rock's tourist industry and represents an important link with our community's past. It also stands as a tribute to a visionary, a man of great integrity who helped define Blowing Rock's future — Grover C. Robbins, Jr.



Tweetsie, Jr. at Mayview Lake



Let's Hit The Slopes!

The winter of 1962 was momentous for our community because we had snow. This snow, however, was different from any we had ever seen before. It was artificial and it was made by another visionary, Bill Thalheimer. He was the founder of the Blowing Rock Ski Lodge and Ski Slopes. With the opening of the area's first ski slope, the Village of Blowing Rock was transformed from a popular summer resort into a year-round tourist mecca. Shops, motels, and restaurants, which had previously closed for the winter months, were now presented with a rare commodity — the winter tourist! This new status as a winter sports attraction encouraged businesses to operate year-round. It also provided another rare commodity — winter employment for many of Blowing Rock's residents.

Originally from southern Alabama, Thalheimer was fascinated with the new process of making artificial snow. He read extensively and collected every piece of literature he could find on New England ski resorts and artificial snow. With a little luck and Mother Nature's cooperation, Thalheimer believed that he could build and successfully operate a ski slope in the south, and he knew just where it should be. He chose Blowing Rock not only for its climate and natural snowfall, but because of its popularity as a summer resort. He knew that the combination of scenic beauty and the allure of a great new sport would draw thousands to Blowing Rock. 121

Some said that Bill Thalheimer was crazy for wanting to build a ski resort in the south, and indeed, when he tried to locate stockholders for his new corporation, he encountered a lot of "doubting Thomases." But with determination and persistence, Thalheimer found enough investors to form the Blowing Rock Ski Lodge, chartered solely for the purpose of bringing a northern sport to the south. As President of this new corporation, Thalheimer was involved in every aspect of the project from designing the slopes to building the ski racks, even though he himself had never been on skis!¹²³

The corporation purchased from Grover, Jr., and Harry Robbins, a fifty acre tract of mountain land on Payne Branch Road, three-and-a-half miles north of Blowing Rock.¹²⁴ Once the mountain was approved by an engineering firm, workers began clearing and grading the forested slopes. The building of a ski slope in the south attracted national press, not all of it positive. Some writers "poked fun at the Banana Belt of skiing where grits covered the slopes." Most said it wouldn't work, and some called it "Thalheimer's Folly."

During the construction of the slopes and lodge, cars filled with curious passengers were constantly climbing up the mountain. They wanted to investigate, to see for themselves what was taking place. It took over a year-and-a-half to complete the project, but when it was finished, Blowing Rock could boast of three newly graded ski slopes (a 2000-foot main slope, a 800-foot intermediate slope, and a 250-foot beginners slope), a T-bar lift, a lodge and restaurant, service lodge, ski rental shop, snack shop, parking lot, and two lakes from which water was drawn to make snow.¹²⁶

The T-bar lift was designed by Hall Ski Lift Company of Syracuse, New York, at a cost of \$30,000 and was the very first of its kind south of the Potomac. The lift was designed to deliver 800 skiers an hour to the top of the main slope. Skiers assumed a semi-sitting position, holding onto the "T" with both hands, and were pulled along on their skis. This lift was eventually replaced by the now more commonly seen chairlift.

The snow-making machinery, resembling a gun on a tripod, was installed at a cost of \$50,000 and included "more than a mile of pipe and hose, two types of whirling nozzles and three big compressors." Artificial snow was made using a combination of air and water sprayed in mistform in below-freezing temperatures.¹²⁷ The Thalheimers had a



thermometer outside the window at their home on Green Hill Road and when it hit twenty-eight degrees, Thalheimer would call the lodge and tell them to start the guns. Sometimes the entire family would find themselves staying up all night watching the thermometer and hoping for cold weather.

The two-story Swiss style ski lodge was designed by local builder Lloyd Robbins and had a dining room which could accommodate 500 people. The restaurant was initially operated by H. M. (Mac) Lanier, who also operated the popular Chestnut Restaurant.¹²⁸ An enormous stone fireplace was the focal point of the lodge and each stone used in its construction was carried up to the site on the backs of construction workers. The machinery and lodge facilities required a full-time staff of forty. Employees were local residents, with the exception of Austrian-born Tony Krasovic, an Olympic trainer and instructor with expertise in making artificial snow.¹²⁹

The Blowing Rock Ski Slopes opened officially on March 3, 1962. Ironically, the opening was delayed because of an abundance of snow which slowed construction.¹³⁰ On opening day, the mountain road leading to the slopes was jammed. Those present at the opening ceremonies included state and local government officials, local residents from all parts of the county, and sports enthusiasts from all over the south. Over one thousand cars were parked that first day and it was estimated that over 15,000 skiers visited the area during the 1962-1963 season.¹³¹ Such success prompted a Charlotte newspaper to write, "The prospect of selling skiing to a folk whose traditional use of ice is largely limited to fixing juleps is not as dim as on first glance it might appear."¹³²

Thousands learned to ski those first years at the Blowing Rock Ski Lodge. First-time skiers ranged from "a two-year-old daughter of a Georgia couple to a 70-year-old man." ¹³³

Because the ski boom attracted people from all over the south, it stimulated other businesses in Blowing Rock. New retail shops sprang up overnight, offering ski clothing and rentals to skiers and providing more jobs for local residents. Reportedly, because of the skiing boom, three or four large companies moved into the area, providing employment for residents.¹³⁴ Thalheimer's corporation worked with local businesses to help promote travel to the area. They operated a one-call reservation service which gave skiers the opportunity to confirm reservations at any of the participating motels. In 1963, the corporation allowed Appalachian State University to teach a skiing course



Bill Thalheimer with Betty Simpson, "Miss Southern Ski Queen"

on its slopes, making ASU the first school in the south to offer a course in skiing in its regular curriculum.¹³⁵

The new ski slope also brought business to Blowing Rock Hospital. A Hospital official jokingly remarked that the opening of the ski lodge "got us out of the red," referring to the many broken bones and injuries that were treated during those first years.¹³⁶

Thalheimer recognized that what he started at Blowing Rock Ski Lodge and Ski Slopes was in its infancy and would be duplicated. With the success of the Blowing Rock Ski Lodge, others entered this new industry. At Hound Ears, Grover Robbins, Jr. began building his own slope and when this proved to be a success, he and his brother Harry began developing Beech Mountain.¹³⁷

Even though the Lodge and Ski Slopes made a profit in each of the first seven years of operation, and despite the hordes of ski enthusiasts who continued to visit the slopes, the Blowing Rock Ski Corporation faced bankruptcy in 1968.¹³⁸ One possible reason for this apparent contradiction was the emphasis which the corporation placed on real estate sales and land development.¹³⁹ As a result, the Blowing Rock Ski Lodge was sold under foreclosure to four North Carolina businesses for \$160,000, and the name of the corporation was changed to Appalachian Ski Mountain.¹⁴⁰

Today, Appalachian Ski Mountain has 8 slopes and trails, two double chairlifts, and three rope tows. The mountain is nationally known for having the largest ski school in the southeast, The French-Swiss Ski College. The college "has earned acclaim for developing credit and recreation programs for over 100 colleges; military training programs for West Point, the Green Berets, Navy Seals and the Marines; and special programs for amputees and for hosting the Southeastern Special Olympics."¹⁴¹

Even though Cataloochie Ranch in Asheville opened before the Blowing Rock Ski Lodge, and has earned the reputation as the very first commercial slope in North Carolina, Bill Thalheimer and Blowing Rock helped pioneer skiing in this area, changing the face of the town forever.¹⁴²



"Service with a smile" befitting a seasonal mecca

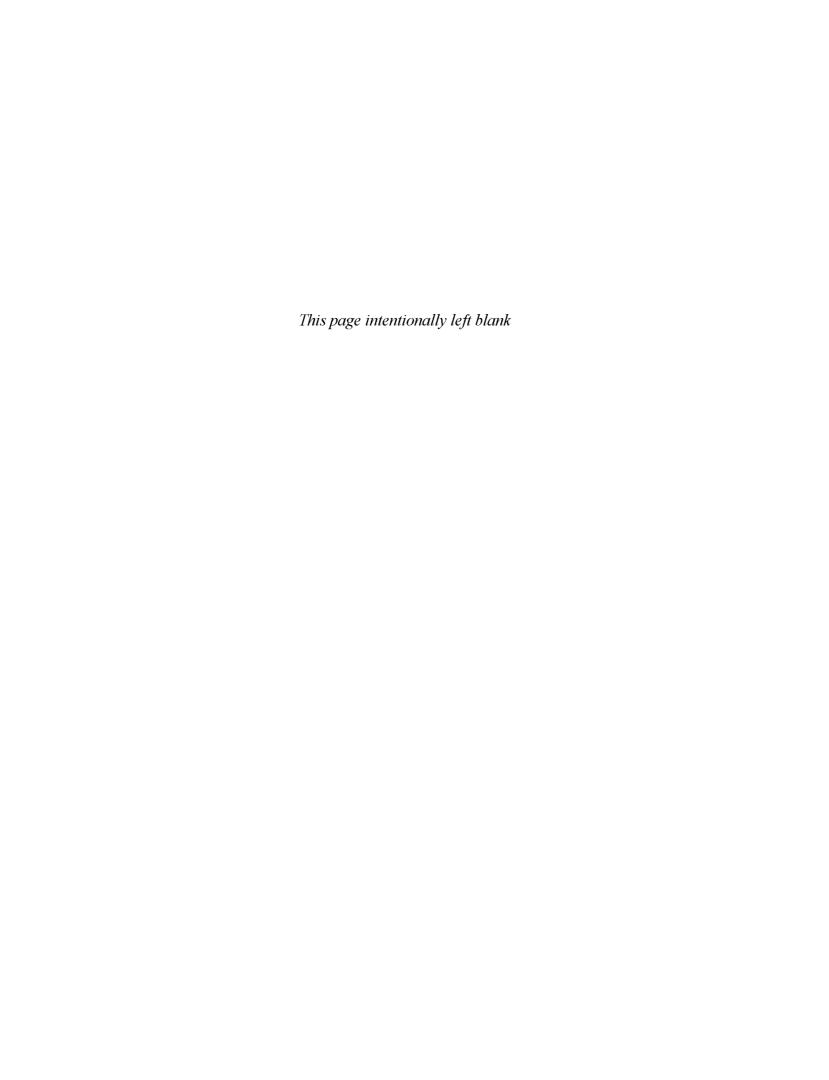
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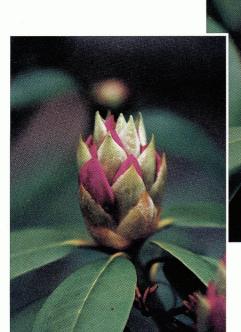
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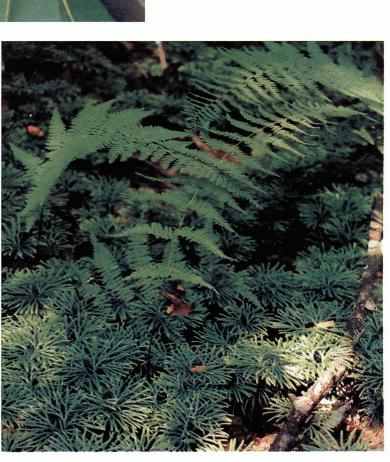
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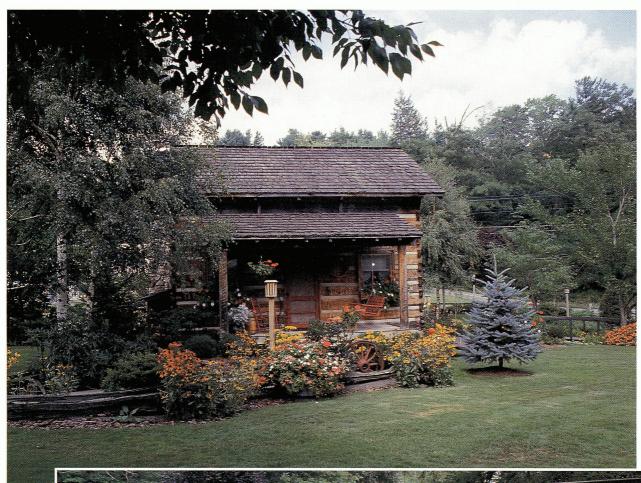


A Photographic Tapestry By Jerry W. Burns



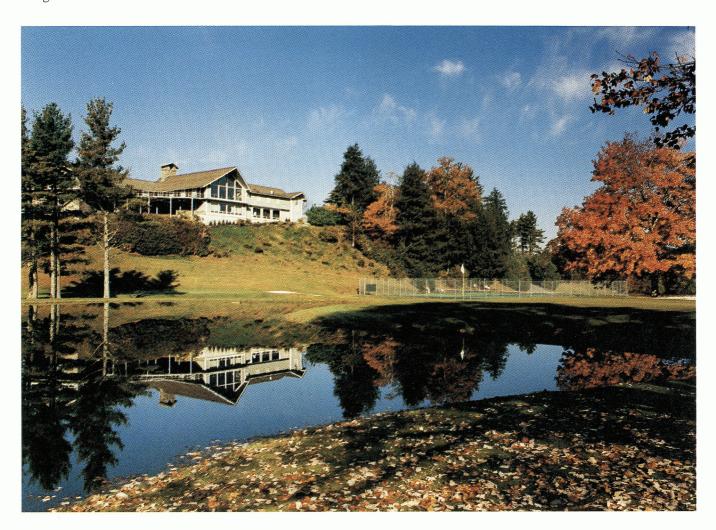


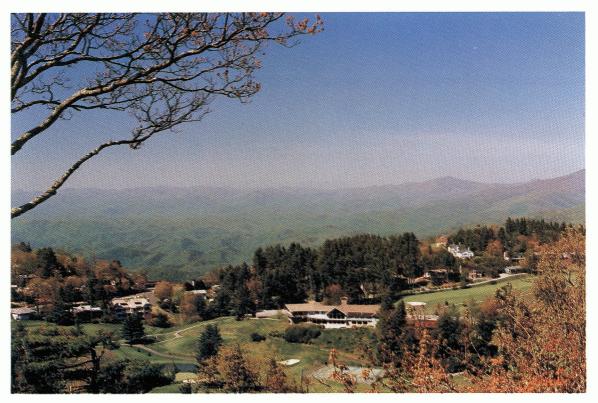




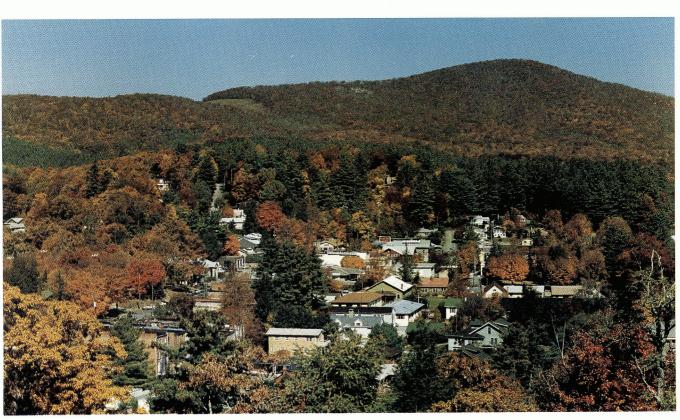


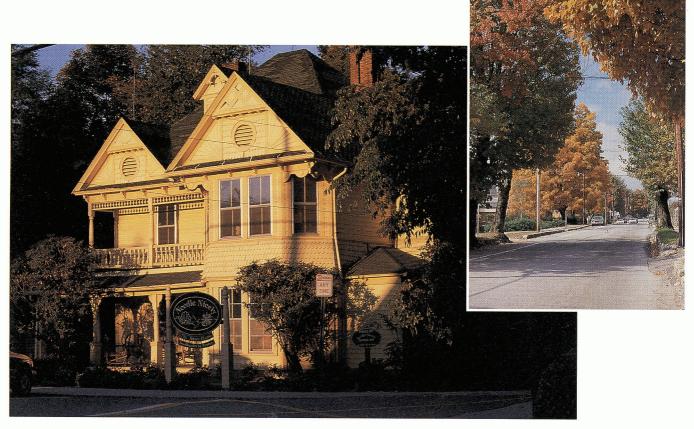


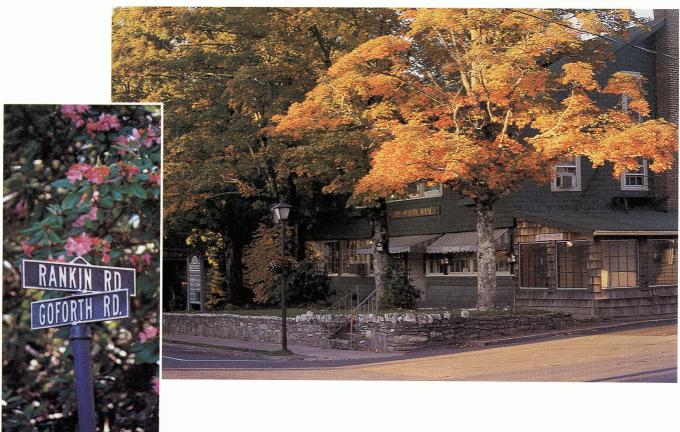


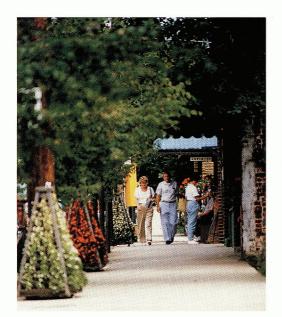


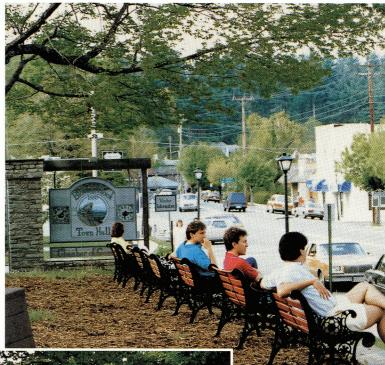




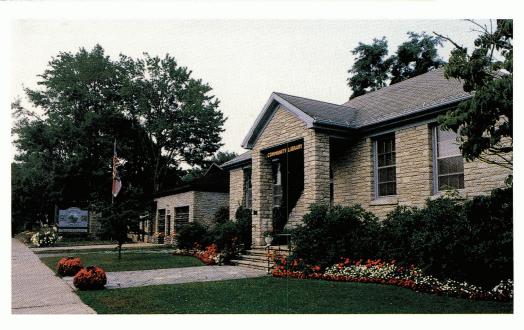




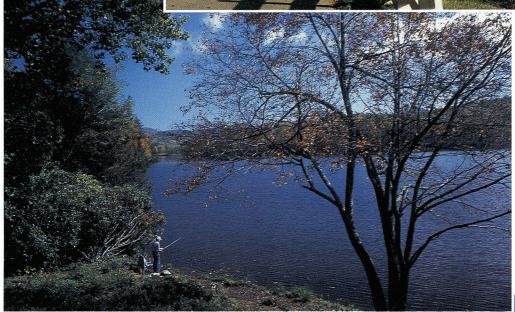




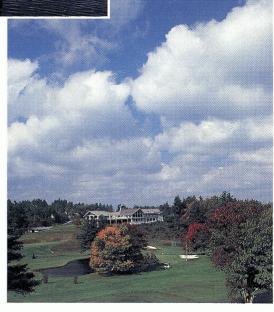










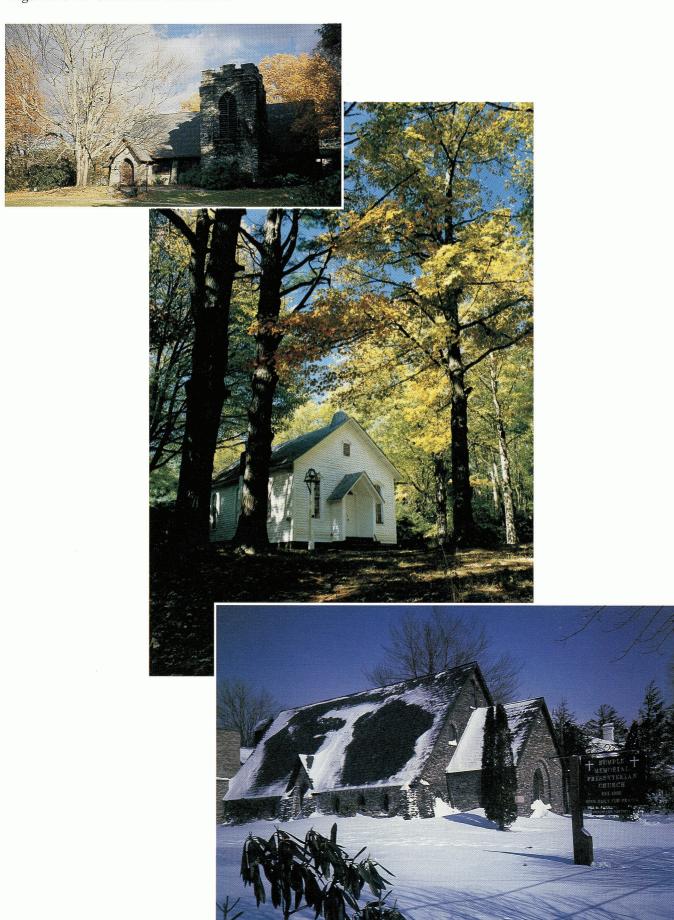


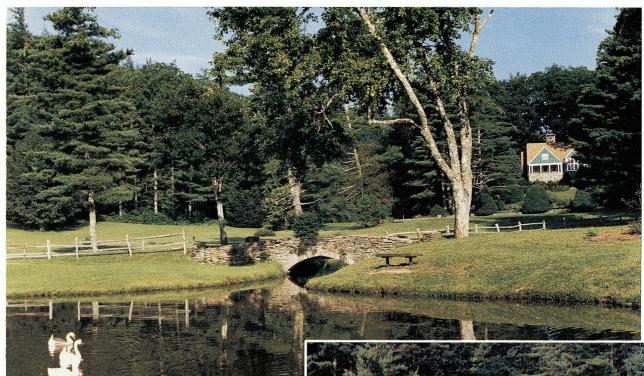


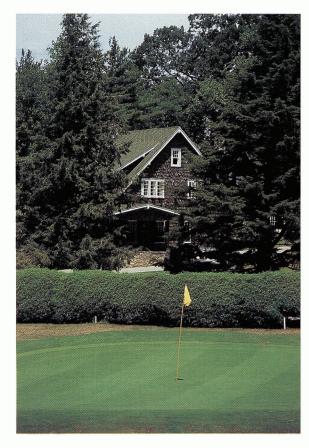










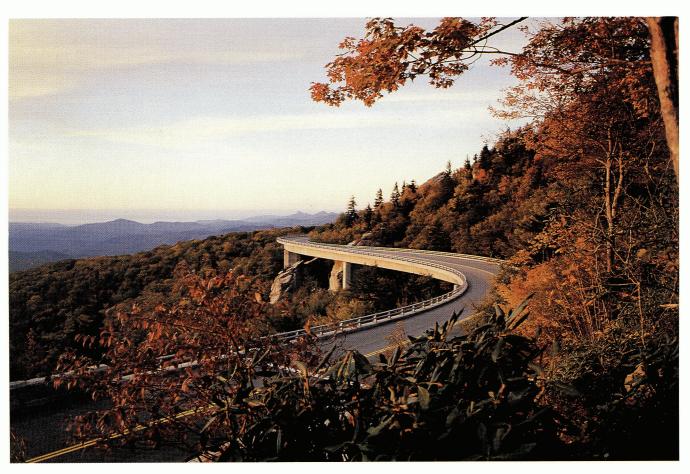


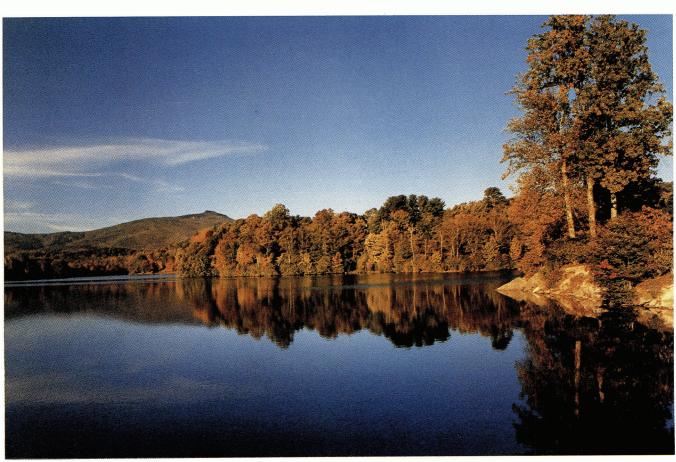


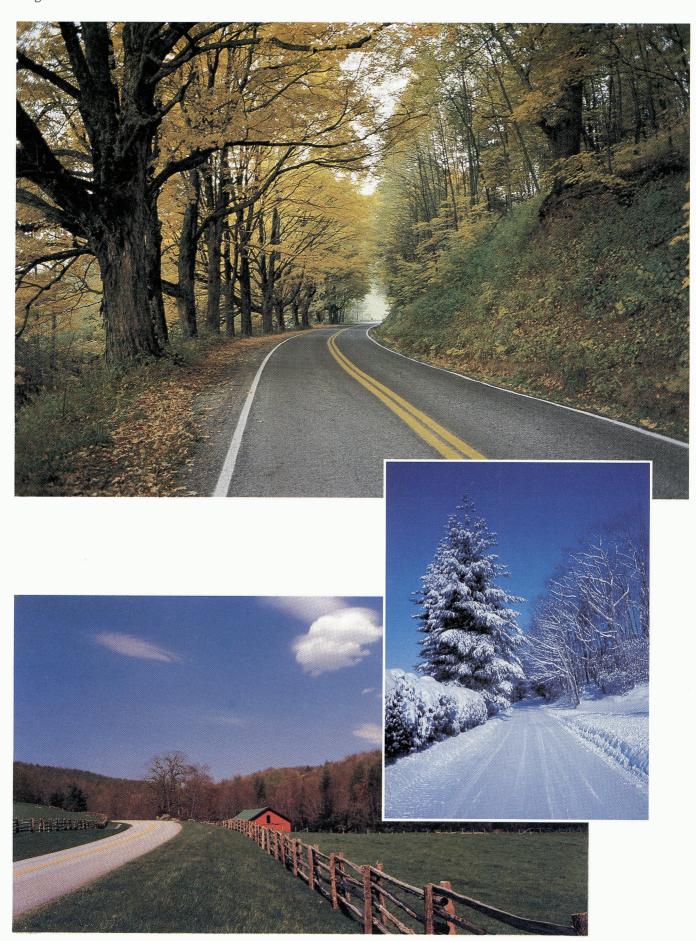


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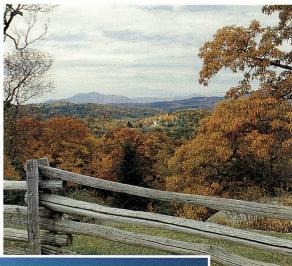












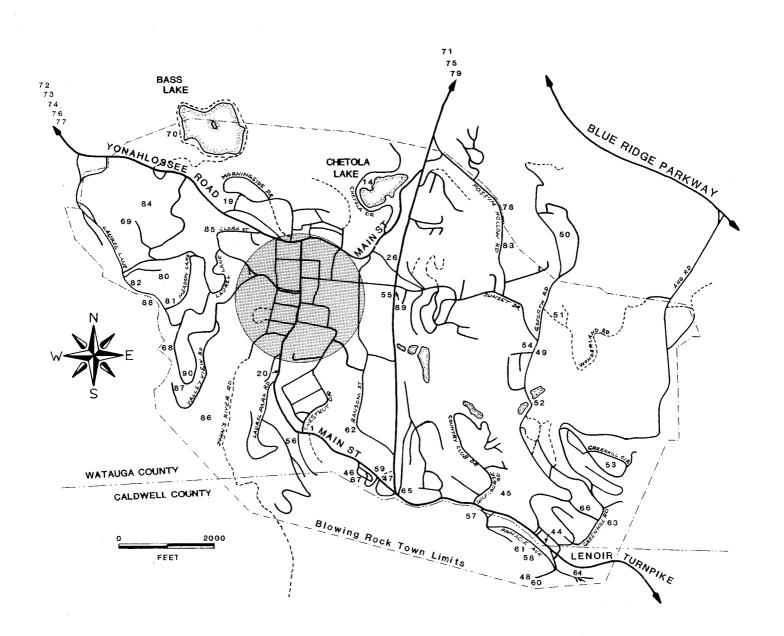


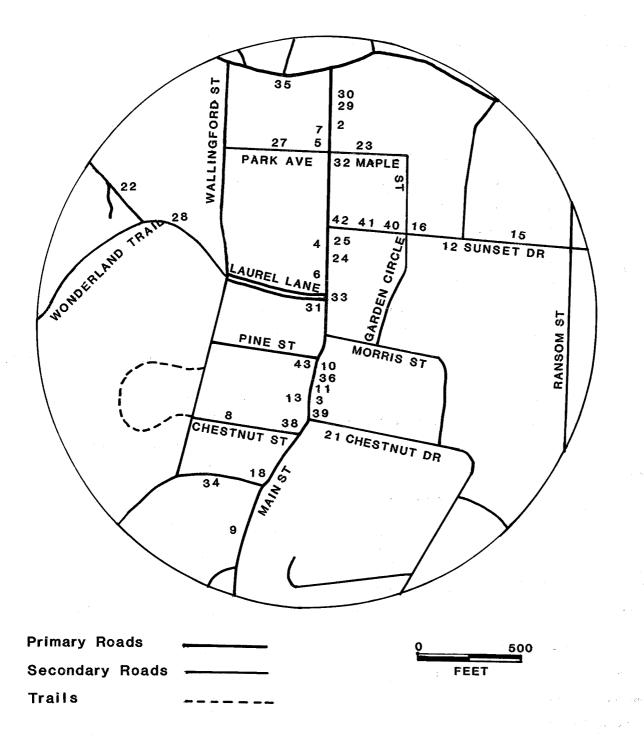




BLOWING ROCK LANDMARKS

BLOWING ROCK LANDMARKS—





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BLOWING ROCK LANDMARKS

- 1. Blowing Rock Hotel Built by Colonel Robert H. Gray and John King in 1889, closed in the early 1940s
- 2. W.L. Holshouser's General Store Opened in 1893 and served as the town's main shopping spot for more than half a century
- 3. The Reeves House and Drug Store Established in the late 1800s by Dr. Reeves
- The Watauga Inn built on the same foundation as the Watauga Hotel after it was detroyed by fire in the early 1900s (one of the cottages is present site of Jenkins Realty.)
- 5. H.C. Miller's General Store Opened in early 1900s, located at the present site of Hayden Pitts Service Station
- 6. Martin House Built in 1870, among Village's oldest structures
- 7. First Baptist Church Constructed in 1924 on the same site as the original 1905 structure. County Pine Newtiques is now located here
- 8. Wallingford Clinic Town's second medical facility, opened in the late 1930s.
- 9. Methodist Church Built in 1900 with chestnut bark siding
- 10. Church of the Holy Spirit and Reading Room First Episcopal Church and early library, destroyed by fire in 1923
- 11. Craig's Grocery Town's oldest grocery dating back to Will Craig
- 12. Blowing Rock High School Closed in 1964 when county high schools consolidated (torn down in the early '70s)
- 13. Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church Original structure built in 1886
- 14. Chetola Property first owned by Len Estes, contained boarding house and grist mill, later home of the Stringfellows, Holts, Alexanders, and Snyders
- 15. Sunshine Inn Early home of Burns family and well-known restaurant dating back to the early 1940s
- 16. Ragged Garden Inn Built in the early 1900s by the Washburns
- 17. Dr. Charles Davant, Jr. Home Blowing Rock's eminent physician and long-time chairman of the Watauga County Board of Education
- 18. "Edgewood" The first Blowing Rock home of Elliott Daingerfield
- 19. "Windwood" Second Blowing Rock home of Elliott Daingerfield
- 20. Dr. Mary Warfield's Clinic First medical facility in Blowing Rock
- 21. St. Mary's of the Hills This Susie P. Stringfellow memorial was consecrated in 1921 (contains Elliott Daingerfield's painting "Madonna of the Hills").
- 22. Old Spring School Located near Mayview Lake, operated from 1900 to 1918
- Blowing Rock Ice House This early rock structure also served as the town's first gas station (currently home of the Blowing Rock Stage Company).
- 24. Blowing Rock Bank Founded in 1904
- 25. Stories Soda Shop Affectionately known as "Coman's," for decades the local gathering place for the town's young people
- 26. Goodwin Family Weavers and Showroom
- 27. Grover C. Robbins, Sr. Home
- 28. Mayview Lake Formerly Watauga Lake, to be named Broyhill Lake in honor of the Broyhill family
- 29. Berryman's Drug Store and Soda Shop
- 30. Holshouser Home W.L. Holshouser was one of town's first merchants.
- 31. Hayes House One of the earliest remaining residences in Blowing Rock
- 32. First Town Hall and Chamber of Commerce Constructed in the early 1900s (currently Vagabond Gift Shop)
- 33. Yonahlossee Theatre Site of premiere for Paramont Studio's "Spawn of the North"

- 34. Dr. Mary Warfield home
- 35. Ed Robbins Blacksmith Shop
- "Bootblacks"—Father Gryder's Shoe Shop
- 37. Joe Clarke's Homesite First civic leader
- 38. "Lerada" Colonel and Mrs. Ogden Edwards Home (built in early 1900s)
- 39. Blowing Rock Exchange Managed for years by Miss Lena Reeves, this early craft store featured handmade bedspreads and homemade cookies and candy.
- 40. Original Blowing Rock Post Office
- 41. Town Hall, Fire Station and Jail Managed for decades by Nettie Greene, the town clerk
- 42. Moody Furniture Three generations of hand-crafted furniture, established by A.C. Moody
- 43. Schenck Cottage Confederate Major Henry Franklin Schenck was one of the town's first cottagers.
- 44. Green Park Hotel Opened in 1891 by a syndicate of Lenoir businessmen led by George Washington Finley Harper
- 45. Green Park Norwood Golf course Built in 1915 and expanded to eighteen holes in 1922 under the guidance of designer Donald Ross (became part of Blowing Rock Country Club in 1971)
- 46. Skyland Inn Located at the site of today's Farm House closed in 1914
- 47. Skyland Institute Opened in 1887 by Miss Emily Prudden
- 48. The Blowing Rock Owned by the Bernhardt family of Lenoir, developed into tourist attraction by Grover C. Robbins, Sr.
- 49. Mount Bethel Reformed Church Town's first church, built in 1882
- 50. Hughes Estate This 58 acre estate of the prominent Charlestonians became the Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds in 1946.
- 51. "Pineacres" Summer home of David Ovens
- 52. Green Park Stables Built in 1924, run by Jinny and Ozelle Moss (The swallow's return there every summer to nest).
- 53. Green Hill Site of first organized Blowing Rock Horse Show, named in honor of the town's first family
- 54. Ed Sullivan Grave c. 1794, town's earliest known grave site
- 55. Appalachian Motel Town's first motel, built by Grover Robbins, Sr. in 1951
- 56. Buxton Road Charlottean G.T. Buxton built summer cottages there shortly after the turn-of-the-century.
- 57. "The Bark" Popular night spot for decades (today Big Dollar Grocery)
- 58. Blowing Rock home of J.W. Cannon
- 59. D.P. Coffey's Grocery Served the needs of the Green Park area for many years
- 60. J.C. Ford's Cloudland Cafe This early diner predated Grover Robbins' development of the Blowing Rock.
- 61. "Dawn Hill" C.V. Henkel Home
- 62. "Tin Top" Black Social Club
- 63. Major Harper Home Constructed before the turn-of-the-century and later destroyed by fire after being struck by lightning
- 64. Alex Shuford Cottage Built in the late 1920s, this home is among the best remaining examples of the use of chestnut bark siding
- 65. Church of God Built in 1920
- 66. Church of the Epiphany Built in 1948
- 67. "Oh My!" The tea room/gazebo of Mrs. Nan Cannon Stringfellow
- 68. Mayview Manor Built by Walter Alexander in early 1920s and subsequently owned by Thomas Broyhill (closed in the fall of 1966)

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- 69. Lloyd M. Tate Memorial Horse Show Grounds Former location of Mayview Park Golf Course
- 70. Moses H. Cone Estate -- The "Denim King's" mountain estate, consisting of 3,516 acres, was acquired between 1893 and 1899 (Manor House built in 1900).
- 71. Tweetsie Railroad Part of the old Eastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina Line which ran between Johnson City, Tennesse and Boone
- 72. "Westglow" Elliott Daingerfield's third Blowing Rock home, built in 1917
- 73. Julian Price Memorial Park 4,200 acres of forest, lakes, streams, and meadows on the Blue Ridge Parkway
- 74. Camp Yonahlossee Camp for young girls established by Dr. and Mrs. A.P. Kephart in 1922
- 75. Camp Catawba Vera Lachmann's dream for young boys
- 76. Camp Sky Ranch Jack Sharp established this camp for the physically handicapped in 1948.
- 77. Sandy Flat School Built by Moses Cone in 1904, became the Sandy Flat Baptist Church in 1928
- 78. Possum Hollow School This one-room log cabin school operated in the early 1900s.
- 79. Silver Lake School Located near where US. 321 and the Blue Ridge Parkway intersect
- 80. "Greystone" Home of Robert and Myra Mebane, constructed in 1922
- 81. "Miramichi" Home of Joseph and Annie Cannon, constructed in 1927
- 82. "Far Horizons" Home of Anne Cannon Forsyth, one of the town's foremost philanthropists
- 83. Blowing Rock Negro Community Center and Church Built in 1948 (later to become First Independent Baptist Church)
- 84. Mayview Park Golf Course Nine holes running parallel to one another
- 85. Lloyd Tate Stables "Mr. Horse Show" managed this popular gathering spot of the town's equestrians.
- 86. Glen Burney Falls Donated to the town by Miss Emily Prudden
- 87. Mayview Gun and Rod Club Built in 1917 and once managed by the famed wild west cowgirl, Annie Oakley
- 88. J.E. Broyhill home
- 89. Christian Science Church Built in 1955
- 90. Cameron Morrison Home Former North Carolina Governor

"Wauhonhasee"

An Indian Legend of Blowing Rock (Reprinted In Its Entirety From An Original Work By Ada Campbell Larew in 1927)

PREFACE

Back in the days when traveling through the mountains of North Carolina was done by stage and covered wagon, the author had a remarkably interesting experience. To explore the wilds beyond the boundaries of civilization, to study the beauty and harmony of mountain scenery, to come in close contact with the secluded natives, and to wander in a terestial paradise that was in bygone days the haunts of the early Indian was a dream fulfilled.

Mountain scenery along Yonahlossee Road, to the crest of Blowing Rock, is of surpassing grandeur. It is truly God's country; a land of towering peaks in a hazy blue against the sky. In the creation of this wild, peaceful, and exceedingly fascinating country one realizes that Mother Nature was at her best.

Here many waters fall from mountain tops to lowlands below on their blissful journey toward the distant sea. Here the breezes murmur like the old harps of Italy. Here the pine and balsam perfume the air sweeter than oriental incense. Here the calyx carpet the loamy earth in bronze and green, and darksome ravines produce the loveliest wildflowers. Here is the land of Indian legends, myths and dreams.

The village of Blowing Rock nestles upon an elevation which enables the traveler to view one of the grandest mountain kingdoms in all the world. Nothing is more inspiring to the soul than this scenic grandeur. Did it not inspire the Indian to believe in a Supreme Being whom they worshipped in a faith that was strangely beautiful? It is the early Indian, forever gone from this land, that inspires the writing of this legend—almost forgotten in the passing of time.

While the author was sitting upon a great protruding rock, gazing thoughtfully into space where the placid profile of Grandfather mountain towers toward the heavenly dome, a half-breed Indian appeared with a basket of fragrant balsam to sell. He was an aged man, and had every indication of an Indian. Climbing to the tip of the rock in full view of the violet rays of an afternoon sun just beaming upon the crest of old Grandfather, he recited the legend of the rock in a voice clear and musical. It was a scene that will never be re-enacted for his noble spirit has gone to a better land, but the rock today is as firm as the rock of Gibraltar, and the legend lives in memory of his people.

When the white man entered the wilderness of Tennessee and North Carolina, it naturally disturbed and irritated the Indian in his own happy hunting ground. The Cherokees were the aristocrats of all tribes, and the Chicasaws perhaps the most warlike. A chieftain of the Chicasaws had an unusually beautiful daughter, so the legend ran, and in fear of the white man's admiration, he journeyed far from the plains to a mountain top (Blowing Rock) and left her there with her squaw-mother and went back to his tribe. One day a Cherokee brave wandered into the wilderness below. The maiden saw him from a craggy cliff, and in innocent play, shot an arrow in his direction. By and by he appeared before her wigwam singing a song of his happy land.

Ere long the maiden and the brave became lovers, dancing merrily day by day along the streams thundering over mighty rocks, and flitting through pathless woods in search of game while the squaw-mother kept the fire burning outside the wigwam.

One Indian summer day they wandered toward a rock where the Cherokee brave saw a strange redden sky in the distance which he took to be a warning of trouble. Duty came first, he must return to the plains, but the maiden cried "No, no!" In desperation he leaped from the edge of the rock down the abyss below. The maiden entreated him to come back, but he heeded her not. Then she prayed to the Great Spirit and to the wind, to blow her lover back. While she stood with outstretched arms calling to the Great Spirit, a gust of wind blew her lover back to her; but to end in a tragedy afterwards. Since that day there has been a perpetual breeze blowing upward from beneath the great rock—hence the name of Blowing Rock.

"Wauhonhasee"

Just at dawn of southern history
When North Carolina and Tennessee
Was a wild and perilous wilderness,
And the red man roamed in happiness
From fertile valley and grassy plain
To the great peaks of Smoky Mountain,
The Anglo-American cometh to explore
The country and rugged river shore.

One by one traveled far from home, Traveled undaunted and alone Through valley and darksome ravine And a land of weird dreams. Ere long to settle on Nolachucky, Holston, Watauga and Tennessee Where conflicts with Indian braves Sent many a settler to his grave.

But the Indians had their glory,
Legends in beautiful story
That live while the brave Choctaws,
The Creeks, Cherokees and Chicasaws
Have gone to that Great Spirit sublime—
A religious faith almost divine.
Tis four-score years since their banishment
From this land—a land of contentment.

There's a story told of Wauhonhasee, An Indian maiden of wondrous beauty Who lived in seclusion on mountain high, Her wigwam against the lofty sky. Wauhonhasee and her mother-squaw Were of the wandering Chicasaws; Her chieftain father knew the danger Of the white man and of stranger.

So he journeyed to the "Land of the Sky" And left her 'neath the trees that sigh, The wildcat slumbering in his lair, The hissing serpent and birds of the air. But Wauhonhasee loved the wilds of Nature, Her freedom and her pleasure, The sparkling, dancing waters pouring O'er rocky beds and always going.

Wauhonhasee was ne'er so happy and gay As when flitting along the rugged way, Chasing playful fawn and skittish doe Down the narrows where the streams flow. Then to pause in silent admiration Of God's wonderful creation, And the eagle strong and proud In his home above the clouds.

Upon a blissful day in July
'Neath a blue ethereal sky,
Wauhonhasee wandered to a craggy rock
Far above the pines and hemlock,
To view the fair land beneath her
When lo! an Indian traveler,
Decorated in the brightest wing
Sat smoking by a babbling spring.

Her eyes sparkled, her heart fluttered, And in her joy she softly muttered With the passing Appalachian breeze Murmuring through the forest trees. Then she lost him 'mid the spreading pine Where rhododendron and laurel twine. Up with her bow—a marksmanship rare— And sent an arrow into the air.

Long she waited, waited in vain
To see the brave from Indian plain;
Long she lingered, lingered in hope,
High up on the mountain slope.
Then shadows grew dim, dark and gray
To warn her of the passing of day.
Quickly she bounded through fern and moss
Back to mother-squaw stern and cross.

In her happiness Wauhonhasee forgot
The stranger who heeded her not;
So while gathering wildflowers to deck
Her braided hair and graceful neck,
The Indian brave appeared upon the scene
Creeping softly behind the evergreen;
There he waited for the charm of night,
Waited to pour out his heart's delight.

Alas! she scampered away with ease, Fluttering in the balmy breeze
To her restful, comforting wigwam
And the incense of balsam.
Snug and warm she lay in Utopian dream
'Neath her doe-skin fit for a queen
While her mother-squaw peacefully lay
Dreaming of the plains far away.

Out of the night 'neath a silvery moon Mid the fragrant lily bloom, The sighing winds and mournful pines Come a strange song—something divine. Wauhonhasee quickly to her feet, Listened to the melody low and sweet; Surely it was a message borne On the wings of early morn.

Mid dancing, lowering shadows falling, The dove and whippoorwill calling, A willowy, youthful Indian stealing Near the wigwam with friendly feeling. Proudly he sang in plaintive song Of the Cherokees and warriors strong; His roving far from home and tribe In search of a lovely bride.

Wauhonhasee's heart bounded in glee When she called to the Cherokee To partake of her cheerful wigwam, And a blanket comfortably warm. He told her of the brave Creeks in war Of the tribes wandering 'neath a star Toward a land of sorrow and unrest—A land they call "The Far West."

Wauhonhasee grew sad and tearful, Her spirit meek and sorrowful. Had her chieftain father left her? Had he gone from her forever? Must she live alone on mountain, Ne'er to return to Indian plain? Must she become the Cherokee's bridge And leave her Chicasaw tribe?

Long she waited and watched in vain For the chieftain to come again. Was he lost to his Wauhonhasee, Gone from the plains of Tennessee? With the Cherokee lingering near Driving away all sorrow and fear, Wauhonhasee's spirit back to laughter Clinging to her bold comforter.

Then the Cherokee's ardent wooing His sweet and gentle cooing With the wind and distant thunder And a spirit to forever wander, They bounded gayly o'er rock and rill Never weary and never still.

Then to craggy cliff—a lovely sight—

Where the wind blows day and night.

Ere long they saw a flaming red sky
That brightened the mountains high.
"It is a warning from the Cherokees.
I must go—I must go, Wauhonhasee!"
Cried the lover desperately.
In fear of poor Wauhonhasee
He leaped from the cliff down the abyss,
Down mid the winds' perpetual hiss.

Wauhonhasee cried out in her grief
To the Great Spirit for relief.
"O wind! blow him back to my heart."
She cried and she moaned in the dark.
She prayed the night long, prayed faithfully,
Ne'er ceasing until dawn beamed brightly
And the mist had cleared, the sun did glow
Down in that dismal abyss below.

Wauhonhasee fell upon bended knee Calling to her noble Cherokee, The Indian spirit of other years To heed her sorrow and her tears. Quick as a flash up come the brave From the deep and unfathomed cave. Then they turned to worship the sun For the blessing they had won.

Through wildwood and o'er foaming brook, Through loamy dell and shady nook, Wauhonhasee and her lover roamed that day Then back to the wigwam tired of play. Just when the gray of dawn appeared And before the mist had cleared, A raven moaned and moaned for the dead. 'Tis a warning the Indians dread.

In the gray haze of Indian summer And the flowers gone in number, The maple and dogwood in Autum hue And the mountains in dreary blue, The chieftain of the conquered Chicasaws Wandered back to his child and squaw. In company with Wauhonhasee.

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The savage chieftain quick to anger Drove a knife into the stranger. Swift as a frightened deer on trail, Swifter than an ocean ship in sail, Wauhonhasee bounded toward a ravine deep There to mourn her sorrow and to weep. Down the silvery current falling She heard her lover calling.

Just as the sun went down in glory
So ended Wauhonhasee's love story;
O'er the waterfall and 'neath the spray
The chieftain found her that day.
Tenderly he gathered her to his breast,
'Twas a farewell to the spirit at rest.
Then down the mountain went the chieftain
Ne'er to wander back again.

The End.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BARRY BUXTON has been a teacher, researcher, publisher, editor, and community leader with extensive international experience. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska. Currently Dr. Buxton serves as the president of Lees-McRae College. Prior to his tenure at Lees-McRae, he served as the Vice President of Special Projects at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Dr. Buxton has also served as president of various science and history museums in North Carolina, Texas, and Georgia. During the 1980s, he served as Executive Director of the sixteen-member Appalachian Consortium Press.